



A University of Sussex EdD thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

University of Sussex

**A Case Study of Parental Involvement in Basic
Education in Rural Ghana**

Robert Andrews Ghanney

Submitted to the University of Sussex for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

August 2016

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to the following important persons for their useful criticisms, advice, and suggestions which made the writing of this thesis a success.

First and foremost, my thanks go to my supervisors; Dr. Louise Gazeley and Professor Mairead Dunne, whose constructive criticisms, guidance and suggestions went a long way to help me complete this study. No volume of words can adequately express the nature of my thanks to them.

Mention should also be made of assistance by all lecturers at the School of Education and Social Work, University of Sussex, Brighton. To all of them, I wish to say "mbo na ye" – Well done.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of the Department of Basic Education of University of Education, Winneba, Ministry of Education, Ghana, Effutu Municipal Assembly, Ghana Education Service Directorate, Winneba, communities, schools and parents for their pervasive role during the course of data collection and also sharing their experiences and insights with me.

This acknowledgement must not end without thanking my dear wife – Victoria and children – Fiifi, Stephanie and Stephen for their understanding and invaluable support; my fellow students at the University of Sussex, some of whom have supported and encouraged me in the pursuance of the EdD programme.

Finally, my thanks go to the University of Education for making it possible to secure funding through GET Fund after gaining admission to the University of Sussex, Brighton.

Table of Contents

Title of Page	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures and Appendices	viii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	ix
Summary	xi

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

1.0	Introduction to Chapter 1	1
1.1	Study Rationale and Focus	1
1.2	Research Context	4
1.3	Case Study Location	6
1.4	Significance of the Study	9
1.5	Structure of the Thesis	10

Chapter 2: Conceptualising Parental Involvement in Education

2.0	Introduction to Chapter 2	13
2.1	The importance of the Extended Family	14
2.2	Forms of Parental Involvement	19
2.2 i	Interconnectedness	21

2.2 ii	Relational Aspects of Parental Involvement	23
2.3	Socio-Economic Factors	25
2.3 i	The Home Learning Environment	26
2.3 ii	Costs specially linked to Schooling	27
2.4	Chapter Summary	30

Chapter 3: Parental Involvement in Formal Governance

	Structures within a Decentralised System	32
3.0	Introduction to Chapter 3	32
3.1	Decentralisation	32
3.2	The SMC and PTA as Key Fora within Governance Structures	34
3.3	The Language used within Governance Structures in Ghana	38
3.4	Conceptualising Parental Involvement in Schooling	40

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.0	Introduction to Chapter 4	43
4.1	Methodological Approach	43
4.2	The Case Study Approach	45
4.3	Stages in the Research Design	47
4.3 i	Stage 1: Pilot Study	48
4.3 ii	Stage 2: Documentary Research	51
4.3 iii	Stage 3: Focus Group Discussions	52
4.3 iv	Identification and Composition of Focus Groups	54
Table 4.1	Categories of Participant for Focus Group 1	57
Table 4.2	Categories of Participant for Focus Group 2	58
4.3 v	Planning and conducting the Main Focus Group Discussion	58
4.3 vi	Stage 4: Parent Interviews	62

4.3 vii	Identification and Characteristics of individual Parent Participants	63
	Table 4.3 Parent Participants	65
	Table 4.4 Occupations of Parent Participants	66
4.3 viii	Preparing and conducting the main Parent Interviews	66
4.4	Researcher Identity	68
4.5	Ethical Considerations	69
4.5 i	Negotiating Access to the Research Setting	69
4.6	Data Analysis	72

Chapter 5: Factors affecting Parental Involvement in Basic

Education in rural Ghana 74

5.0	Introduction to chapter 5	74
5.1	Socio-economic factors and the role of the Extended Family	74
5.2	The Impact of Socio-economic factors and the costs of schooling on Parental Involvement	81
5.2 i	Parental difficulty in sending children to school/need to work	81
5.2 ii	Parental difficulty in paying for School	86
5.3	The Impact of Communication on Parental Involvement	90
5.4	The Impact of Literacy and Language on Parental Involvement	93
5.4 i	Parental Literacy as a factor affecting Support for learning at home	93
5.4 ii	Use of English Language as a factor affecting Involvement in School	96
5.5	The Impact of Discipline on Relationships and Parental Involvement	98
5.5 i	Parental Intimidation as a factor limiting involvement in School Activities	98
5.5 ii	Corporal Punishment and Parental Involvement	100
5.6	Chapter Summary	103

Chapter 6: Key Forums for Parental Involvement in

Schools

105

6.0	Introduction to Chapter 6	105
6.1	The School Management Committee	106
6.1 i	Membership and Functions	106
6.1 ii	Training for SMC Members	110
6.1 iii	The SMC and Parental Involvement in School Finance	112
6.1 iv	The Administration of the Capitation Grant	112
6.1 v	Payment of Fees and Levies	120
6.1 vi	The SMC and Parental Involvement in the Monitoring of Teachers	123
6.1 vii	Summary about the SMC	125
6.2	The Parent Teacher Association	127
6.2 i	Membership and Functions of the PTA	127
6.2 ii	Parental Involvement in PTA Fund-raising	128
6.2 iii	The PTA Fund-raising in Support of Pupils and Teacher Welfare	134
6.2 iv	Links between PTA Fund-raising, Parental Involvement and Examination Performance	135
6.2 v	Capital Building through Social Functions of PTA	140
6.2 vi	Summary about the PTA	144
6.3	Chapter Summary	144

Chapter 7: Summary, Contribution to Knowledge and

Implications for Policy and Practice

146

7.0	Introduction to Chapter 7	146
7.1	Summary of Main Findings in Relation to Research Questions	146
7.2	Contribution to knowledge	153

7.3	Recommendations for Policy and Practice	155
7.3 i	SMC Membership and Appointments	156
7.3 ii	Increasing Involvement and Accountability in Financial Matters	157
7.3 iii	Developing Spaces more conducive to Parental Involvement	158
7.4	Final Reflections	159
	References	160

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Map of Ghana showing the Study District	9
Figure 4.1	Flow Chart showing various Stages of Research Design	48

List of Appendices

Appendix A	SMC/PTA Roles and Responsibilities	175
Appendix B	Certificate of Ethical Approval	181
Appendix C	Full Details of Final Focus Group Discussion	182
Appendix D	Excerpts of Initial Coding	185
Appendix E	Research Ethics Checklist (University of Sussex, School of Education and Social Work)	186

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEDP	Accelerated Education Development Plan
BECE	Basic Education Certification Examination
CAS	Critical Analytical Study
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGP	Focus Group Participant
GES	Ghana Education Service
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GOG	Government of Ghana
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
IGF	Internally Generated Funds
JHS	Junior High School
JSS	Junior Secondary School
KVIP	Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit (Latrine)
LDCs	Less Developing Countries
MA	Municipal Assembly
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDE	Municipal Director of Education
MLG & RD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MLG	Ministry of Local Government
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sports
PI	Parent Interview/Interviewee
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association

SFP	School Feeding Programme
SHS	Senior High School
SPIP	School Performance Improvement Plan
SGB	School Governing Board
TI	Teacher Interview
VDUC	Village Development Unit Committee

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**Robert Andrews Ghanney****International EdD****Summary**

This study explores parental involvement in basic education in two school communities in rural Ghana. There has been relatively little previous research on parental involvement in school governance in Ghana generally and in poorer rural areas in particular. In such contexts, the term 'parent' often extends beyond the biological parent to wider family and community networks and in this research, parental involvement is understood as a construct and practice that is both contextually located and produced through the intersecting spheres of influence between school, family and community (Epstein, 1995, 2001).

The study starts from an understanding that when it comes to parental involvement in rural Ghana, there is a continuum of involvement that begins with basic decisions such as whether to send a child to school or not. It also recognises the importance of relational matters and issues of equity (Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander and Hernandez, 2013). Developed as a small-scale qualitative case study, focus group discussions and individual interviews were used to explore the inter-relationships between parents, staff and communities. The decentralised system of education delivery in Ghana assumes an important role for school management committees and parent teacher associations and the focus group discussions therefore involved community participants who were members of school management committees or parent teacher associations as well as head teachers and teachers in each of the two rural case study schools. Additional data were collected from individual interviews with parents.

A key finding of the study was that although the formal structures for parental engagement in school governance were in place, in practice many members of the school management committee were unable to contribute fully to school management. The specific barriers to parental involvement unearthed in the study included socio-economic factors such as the cost of equipping children to attend school but also the loss of income to the family. The practice of corporal punishment was identified as a potential source of misunderstanding between parents and school authorities and as something that could discourage involvement. Tensions in school governance situations also arose from the use of the English language. The study concludes that policies designed to encourage parental involvement in school governance must reflect not only important contextual differences but also the dynamics between structures and participants.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction to Chapter 1

This study explores parental involvement in basic education from the perspectives of community stakeholders and individual parents in two school communities in rural Ghana. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the study by first, presenting the rationale for and focus of the study. I also describe the research context, case study location and profile of the participating schools, indicating also the specific research questions addressed. Next, I state the significance of the study and conclude with a brief overview of the contents of the remaining chapters.

1.1 Study Rationale and Focus

There is resurgent interest in parental involvement in both developed and developing contexts (Holloway et al., 2008; Seitsinger et al., 2008; Tao et al., 2008) as this is seen to have the potential to impact positively on educational access, retention and quality in schooling to benefit children (Fan and Chen, 2001; Hill and Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2005). The education reforms and policies of many countries have therefore given much attention to parental involvement within the specific context of sector decentralisation (Bray, 2001; Lewis and Naidoo, 2006; Mncube, 2007; Kamba, 2010). At the local level, this involves moving certain responsibilities nearer to the school and empowering parents and communities (Arnott and Raab, 2000; World Bank, 2003). It has been argued that “the greater the involvement of parents in schools, the stronger their power base in bringing an influence on decision-making in schools” (Sullivan, 1991, p.101). However, parental involvement is a multi-faceted construct that defies any single rigid theory. As it means different things to different groups in different

contexts it is important to locate it in the specific contexts (Jovett and Baginsky, 1991; Holloway et al., 2008; Seitsinger et al., 2008; Tao et al., 2008).

Attempts at generalising parental involvement across studies should be done with precaution since parental involvement is a multi-dimensional or multi-faceted construct and that the findings of research differ in accordance to the different interpretations or meanings ascribed to the term (Singh et al., 1995, p. 301).

Ghanaian education policy is no different in having identified parental involvement as a central element (Adam, 2005; Pryor, 2005; Akyeampong et al., 2007) and this quotation really depicts the motivation and interest for this study. Recognising that understandings of parental involvement vary, this study explores parental involvement in two Basic Schools in one rural area of Ghana and within the specific context of decentralisation policy.

Education is represented as a shared responsibility between families, schools, communities and others, rather than being the preserve or exclusive role of schools (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999; Afful-Broni, 2005; Epstein and Salinas, 2005). This suggests that parental involvement is produced through the interconnectedness and overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995, 2001) between school, parent and community. One might expect that the more connected parents are to families, teachers and community members, the higher their likelihood of engaging in their children's education and that higher levels of connectedness will be associated with higher levels of positive parental involvement. However, previous research suggests that the relationship between schools and parents is not without problems as interests and priorities for each group differ and the relationship can at times be tenuous and contradictory (Dunne et al., 2007). In developing contexts such as Ghana, financial difficulties such as high schooling costs serve as disincentive for parents to be engaged in the education of their children (Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Avotri,

2000; Oduro, 2000). The capacity of SMCs and PTAs, key fora required for the delivery of decentralised services at the local level in developing countries has also been found to be weak due to factors such as limited formal education, low literacy and a lack of capacity-building and training (Chapman, 2000; World Bank, 2004; De Grauwe et al., 2005; Dunne et al., 2007; Robinson, 2007; Essuman and Akyeampong, 2011).

Relational aspects are also very important in parental involvement. These are not just matter of fact things but things with human dimensions such as respect, trust and communication (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Christenson, 2004; Gyan, 2007). These relational aspects are also part of the idea of interconnectedness and overlapping spheres of influence between school, family and community. If parents are made to feel welcomed at the school, shown respect by school personnel, informed about the academic progress of their children, and assured that all their problems and concerns will be addressed, they are more likely to have a positive experience in terms of involvement in their children's education (Pena, 2000; Christenson, 2004; Torre and Murphy, 2016). This suggests that schools that succeed in engaging parents fully focus on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families and community members.

The study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of how further reforms in policy and practice could help improve parental involvement in basic education in Ghana. It reflects the researcher's professional practice and interest, developed over a 18-year career as a teacher at the junior secondary school (JSS) and senior secondary school (SSS) and then later as a lecturer in the Department of Basic Education at the University of Education, Winneba. One question that repeatedly engaged my interest was what facilitated or inhibited active parental involvement in the school and how it might be improved. I found an opportunity to seek some answers to this question when

I embarked on an International Professional Doctorate Programme (EdD) at the University of Sussex. An earlier study touched on the topic of Ghanaian parents' involvement in their children's homework, a typical example of parental involvement in the education of their offspring. This project helped me to address the realities at the grass roots level in terms of parents as active collaborators in their children's learning, and to consider ways in which they could cooperate with school and the wider community. For this thesis, I have broadened this focus in deciding to research parental involvement in two basic schools in rural Ghana and focusing on how key factors both facilitate or inhibit this.

1.2 Research Context

Ghana is a country in sub-Saharan West Africa. It was the first country in the sub-Saharan West Africa to gain independence from British colonial rule in 1957. English, however, is the official language, a legacy of colonialism (Opoku-Amankwah, 2009). Administratively, Ghana's basic education system falls under the authority of the Ghana Education Service (GES) of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MOESS). The GES is responsible for the delivery of basic and secondary education, as well as sub sectors such as technical and vocational training and teacher education (Teacher Education Division, GES).

Since education reform in 2007, basic education in Ghana has consisted of six years of primary school and three years of junior high school (JHS). A preparatory two-year kindergarten programme for children aged four to five became part of the mainstream education system in 2002. Formal basic education is thus now expected to begin at the age of 4 and end at the age 15 (GOG, 2004). On completion of basic education, pupils must take the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in order to proceed to Senior High School (SHS).

As part of its wider social and democratic governance reforms, the Government of Ghana embarked on a process of education decentralisation in 1987 (GOG, 1996). The central focus of this policy was the prescription of community participation in the affairs of school in each locality (Essuman, 2009; Essuman and Akyeampong, 2011). Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) was introduced in 1995/96 as a critical programme designed to accelerate national decentralisation policy by transferring ownership, management and control of educational service and facilities to the local level (GOG, 1996). FCUBE recommends the formation of school management committees (SMCs), governing bodies and parent teacher associations (PTAs) by individual schools to work hand-in-hand with the head teacher and guide him/her in school policy formulation (GES, 2001).

Although parental involvement in education through community-based school governance has been widely researched in developed countries (Holloway et al., 2008; Seitsinger et al., 2008; Tao et al., 2008), there seems to have been comparatively few studies in developing countries such as Ghana. De Grauwe et al., (2005) argue that much of the literature on parental involvement in developing countries has dealt with issues relating to local finance of education, provision of school buildings, and teacher management and accountability. The inter-relationship between parents, local governance institutions such as the SMC, PTA, and school has been a lesser concern within the policy and research agenda. This is a significant gap because of its implications for parental involvement in education and the benefits it is supposed to provide.

1.3 Case Study Location

In this section, I describe the case study location, selection and profile of the participating schools. In order to ensure anonymity, schools 1 and 2 are used as the pseudonym of the participating communities.

According to Creswell (2003, p.61) a case study is

A problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a “case” or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals

Creswell's (2003, p.61) definition indicates that a case study is about studying a problem that can lead to the understanding of the system in which the problem is found. The system becomes the case and the researcher chooses ‘an event, activity or process or one or more individuals within the system to illuminate it’. In this study, parental involvement is the case and the factors that impact on this involvement have been investigated to help illuminate the nature of the involvement. The specific questions addressed were:

RQ.1 What are the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in the case study schools?

RQ.2 What are the fora for parental involvement?

RQ.3 What forms of involvement are parents engaged in at the case study schools?

The study was qualitative and the methods used in gathering data were focus group discussions, documentary analysis and parent interviews.

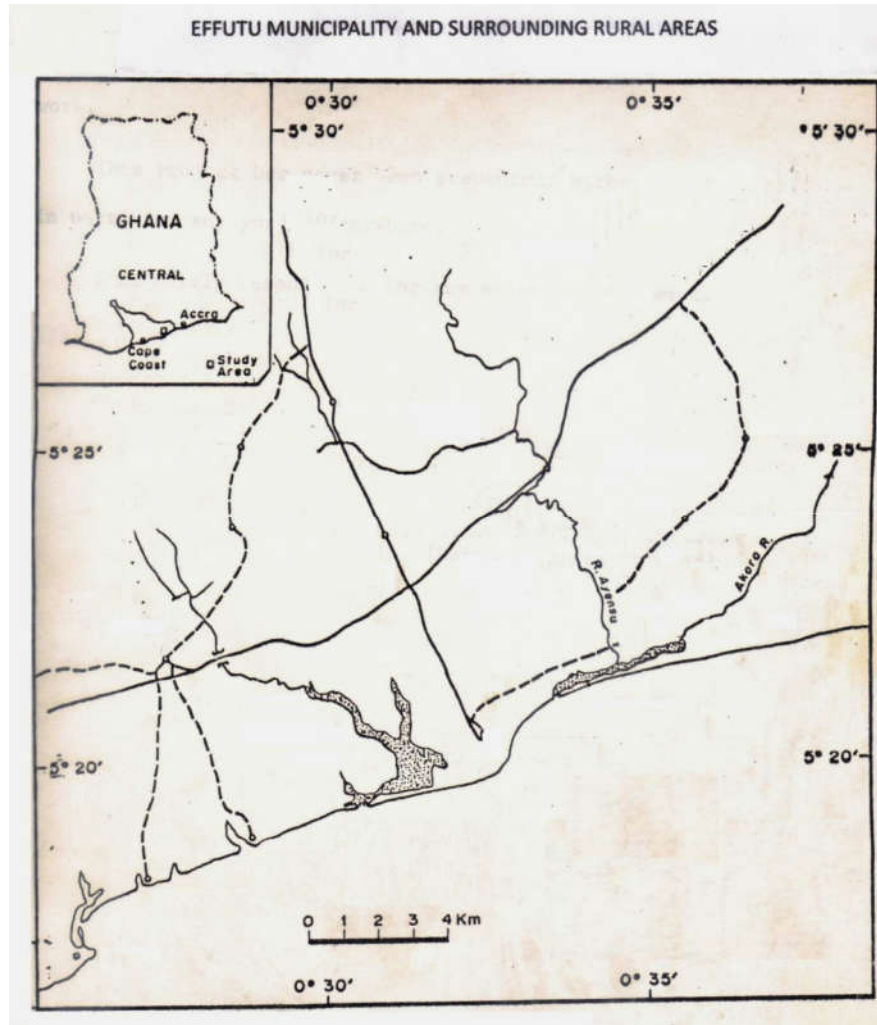
The research was based on a case study approach because the topic was essentially contextual, in the sense that the communities under study had specifically defined profiles. Livelihoods largely depended on farming, trading and/or fishing and these were key to the manner in which the parent-school dynamic was constructed and meanings attached to it. With study participants made up of parents, teachers and community leaders drawn from the SMC and PTA of different backgrounds and experiences, context-specific insights revealed the ways in which the interactions I sought to explore were shaped. In exploring parental involvement as a case study, I was able to develop a comprehensive understanding of parental involvement and its contextual dimensions.

The study was located in rural settlements in Effutu Municipality in Ghana's Central Region. According to the Poverty Profile of Ghana in the 1990s, Central Region is the poorest region in southern Ghana (GSS, 2000). Vulnerability to poverty in Effutu Municipality is further deepened by low returns on fishing which is the major occupation of the people of Effutu Municipality (Brown, 2005). The municipality has a total population of 68,597, which amounts to about 3.1 per cent of the total population of the region (GSS, 2010). The major economic activities are farming and fishing, with full occupational distribution showing that 49 per cent are involved in fishing, 22 per cent in farming and 29 per cent in commerce (GSS, 2010). The main concern in terms of farming is subsistence, but there are few households that practice commercial agriculture (Municipal Directorate of Agriculture, 2009). In the closed season, some fishermen migrate with their families to other fishing communities elsewhere in Ghana, meaning that temporary migration, including that of children is relatively common in the municipality (Casely-Hayford, 2002; Effutu Municipal Assembly Quarterly Brochure, 2008).

The choice of Effutu Municipality for this study was informed by the fact that in most rural areas, school children engage in commercial activities, mostly to support their families and themselves (Casely-Hayford, 2002; MOE, 2005). Considering the potential impact this could have on schooling and parental involvement in education, it seemed useful to explore how both parents and schools approached this challenge in parental-school involvement. I obtained a list of public basic schools from the Effutu Municipality, Education Directorate together with their community profiles with the assistance of the Municipal Director of Education (MDE). Two schools that represented the municipality's two broad livelihood profiles' engagement in fishing and farming (School 1) and trading and commerce (School 2) were selected for the study. School 1 was situated in fishing and farming community. The school had more girls than boys. Due to the location of the school, in terms of economic activities, the majority of families especially, the men migrate in the closed season with their children to engage in fishing activities in July and August (the region's main season). The remaining parents in School 1 community are farmers. School 2 was situated in a very popular commercial area. It was built by the Municipal Assembly and is managed by the Municipal Education Department (Municipal Directorate of Education, 2005). The school has more boys than girls and is slightly larger than school 1. Economic activities consist mainly of small commodities trading. Market days are Tuesday and Friday. On these days, most parents send their children to help in the selling of such items as iced water, bread and other foodstuff in order to raise household income.

It can be inferred from the profiles of the two school communities that governance structures which seem reasonable/workable in other contexts may not work so well in these contexts. Figure 1.1 below shows the geographic location of the study district.

Figure 1.1: Map of Ghana Showing the Study District



Source: Ghana Districts, Effutu Municipal Assembly, Annual Report (2008)

1.4 Significance of the Study

The need for parental involvement in their children's schooling through active SMC and PTA membership is highly emphasised in the 1987 and 1995 Ghanaian education reforms (GOG, 1996). Therefore, the importance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the literature by enhancing the grassroots influence – negative as well as positive – of parents on the education outcomes of their children in the Ghanaian context.

It is hoped that the findings and conclusions of this thesis will be useful in providing information for education managers and policy-makers. At this local level, in sharing their experiences of involvement, parents, teachers and members of the wider community might be better informed as they work together to establish the school as an institution that can be of benefit to all. Accordingly, education managers might wish to employ the recommendations of this study to improve parental involvement in schooling, especially in the most deprived areas of the country. Similarly, the study might assist education policy-makers to identify obstacles to effective sector development, which could result in recommendations for improved practice.

Indeed, policy-makers at both state and local levels might be interested in the results of this study in terms of assessing the degree of parental engagement in education and future planning around school based decision-making. School boards, principals, and GES officials could use the results of this study to inform their practices, and make necessary changes in the administration of the SMCs and PTAs.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has presented the rationale and focus for the study and introduced key details of the research context, the case study location and the need for this research. This section outlines the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

In chapter 2, I begin by first, understanding the idea of parent and parental involvement. I then show how this varies across contexts and here I mean the idea of extended families. Next, I highlight the importance of understanding parental involvement as involving overlapping spheres of influence between school, parent and community. These are shaped by relational matters which play out in/ across both formal and informal. It concludes with a discussion of key barriers to parental

involvement in children's education as these affect parental involvement in many ways and raise issues of equity.

In Chapter 3, the literature review focuses on involvement in formal governance structures operating in the SMC and PTA because these claim to open spaces for parental involvement in school. I begin by reviewing literature on decentralisation and the roles given to parents within these systems in the context of Ghana. Next, I discuss the SMC and PTA as formal structures in developing countries such as Ghana as these are key fora for parental involvement. I also look at the issue of language used within the formal fora of school governance structures in Ghana. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how parental involvement has been conceptualised within this study.

In Chapter 4, Research Methodology and Methods, I describe and explain the considerations in the development of the research methodology. I also describe the research process in terms of the research design and methods, procedures for gathering and analysing data, and ethical issues.

Chapter 5, Factors affecting Parental Involvement in Basic Education in rural Ghana examines the barriers to the engagement between the various actors, the study schools, parents and local communities. I also suggest ways in which parental involvement can be facilitated.

The second analytical chapter, Key Forums for Parental Involvement in Schools presents the expectations of the formal school governance institutions – the SMC and the PTA as described in policy documents in relation to education decentralisation. I

discuss the extent of participation in school governance and how this affects the relationship between the study schools, local communities and parents

In Chapter 7, I consider the key issues that emerged from the two analytical chapters in terms of the research questions, and discuss their overall significance to parental involvement in school. I also discuss the contribution of this research to knowledge and reflect on the research process in terms of the policy implications that have arisen.

Chapter 2: Conceptualising Parental Involvement in Education

2.0 Introduction to Chapter 2

Parental involvement is a multi-faceted phenomenon that cannot be captured by any single rigid theory and it needs to be understood in context. This chapter addresses the nature of the relationships between parents and schools and how these are constructed. I begin by first discussing the idea of parent and show how this varies across contexts. Here I include the idea of extended families. Next, I highlight the importance of understanding parental involvement as involving overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995, 2001) between school, parent and community. Once again contextual factors are important in an examination of the inter-connectedness among family, school and community. These are also shaped by relational matters which play out in/across fora both formal and informal. It concludes with a discussion of key barriers to parental involvement in children's education because these affect parental involvement in many ways and raise issues of equity. The literature reviewed in this chapter is therefore particularly pertinent to the first research question: What are the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in school? as these shape the parental involvement that occur within key fora.

Literature from both developed and developing contexts have been included in this discussion but where possible there is a specific focus on rural Ghana. I have drawn on unpublished works, conference papers and official documents as well as journal articles. Literature from developed contexts such as the United Kingdom and United States of America, specifically studies on interconnectedness of family, school and community, relational matters and issues of equity have been very helpful and I have also considered how findings from these countries might be relevant to the Ghanaian

context which is important given that there have been few studies on parental involvement in basic education in Ghana. It builds on the reading undertaken for my critical analytical study (CAS) 'Facilitating Parental Involvement in Basic Education'. This raised concerns about poor parents' capacity to become involved in their children's education.

2.1 The importance of the Extended Family

In exploring parental involvement in basic education, it is first important to understand the notion of parent which is often implicit or assumed in parental involvement. As with most concepts, the definition of 'parent' is difficult and complex, thus, who is a parent and consequently, what constitutes parental involvement in the child's basic education varies across contexts (Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2004; Holloway et al., 2008; Seitsinger et al., 2008). In this section, I discuss the meaning of the term 'parent' including how it applies to rural Ghana. I identify a pattern of seasonal migration and cultural differences that highlights the importance of the extended family. I go on to discuss how gendered preference (i.e., the prioritisation of boy child education) limits mothers' and grandmothers' involvement in their children's education.

According to the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996, p.4), a 'parent' is the biological father, mother or guardian of the learner; the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligation of a pupil or learner's education at school. In their study on Schools reaching out: Comprehensive parent involvement in primary schools conducted in South Africa, Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004, p.6) widen the definition to include not only biological parent, guardians, grandparents but also any adult who is responsible for the child when attempting to establish or improve home-school relationships.

In other words, anyone who provides full-time care to one or more children at school qualifies as a 'parent'. Such a broad definition, encapsulating a biological progenitor, a family or other community member, and indeed any adult who provides care for a minor is well suited for the Ghanaian context where the dynamics of the extended family system make the definition of 'parent' rather fluid; it is very common for children to live with relatives who are not their biological parents but who assume responsibility for the upkeep of the child, including their schooling (GSS, 2000). To sum up, in Ghana, the term parent commonly includes other members of the family, such as grandparents, older siblings, aunts and uncles, close family friends, neighbours and members of the community who care about the child's education or more. In the coastal areas of Ghana, many parents are seasonal migrants who leave their children in the care of relatives to enable them to provide for family sustenance (Care International, 2003). This suggests that the definition of parent debate in Ghana links with the extended family but also the impact of migration. In Ghana, child fostering, popularly known as "auntie adoption", exemplifies interconnectedness in relation to parental involvement in the child's well-being. Such fostering is a traditional practice in which parents place their offspring in the care of a relative, most often an aunt who assumes responsibility for the child's education (Case, Paxson and Abledinger, 2004). There seems to be a rural-urban dimension to fostering and education access. Pilon (2003) suggests that in rural areas, the enrolment rate of fostered children is higher than that of the household's own children, an indication that children are fostered in order to attend school perhaps. In urban areas, on the other hand, Pilon (2003) argues that fostered children have lower enrolment rates than the household's own offspring which suggests that children, particularly girls, are fostered in urban areas to provide domestic support to the households, rather than to access education (Akyeampong et al., 2007). This suggests that both the traditional environment and the family group

influence the way in which the involvement of parents or guardians in children's education occurs.

In developing contexts such as Ghana, the extended family also links with poverty which affects the capacity to be fully involved in a child's education. According to Powell et al., (2004, p.7), over 98 % of children in developing countries separated from their parents by reason of death or other causes live under the care of other members of the extended family. Even when one or both parents are alive, a fair number of vulnerable youngsters live with people who are not their biological parent. The literature shows that this tradition is waning as a result of the reduced capacity of the extended family safety net to care for the increasing number of vulnerable children (UNICEF, 2003). As United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) (2003) acknowledges,

This traditional support system is under severe pressure and in many instances has already been overwhelmed, increasingly impoverished and rendered unable to provide adequate care for children (p.14)

According to UNICEF (2003), households accommodating orphans are more likely to become poor, mainly due to high dependency ratios and without support, the extended family system will continue to have negative consequences for children.

Dunne and Ananga (2013) add another dimension to the definition of the 'parent'. In their study on Dropping out: Identity conflict in and out of school conducted in rural Ghana, they argue that the term 'parent' refers to "young persons in school who were occupying position of seniority with respect to dependants and had significant adult responsibilities, were required to make decisions on behalf of others, had certain levels of authority and contributed economically to their families" (p. 203). By implication, young persons in school were also acting as a parent in the level of responsibility in the rural communities of Ghana.

In her study on Engendering social reproduction: Mothers in the educational market place conducted in England, Reay (1998) argues that the interaction between professionals and parents is largely linked to the involvement of mothers and that typically when people use the term 'parent', they mean mothers.

It has been shown in much of the relevant literature in developed contexts that mothers have a key role in children's education (Astone and McInahan, 1991; Eccles and Harold, 1996 ; Riordan, 2004), however, in rural communities in developing contexts, where resources are in short supply, it appears that female children are disadvantaged in terms of education access. In developing contexts, gendered practices at the household level affect the opportunities of girls and boys to access and complete education. Studies indicate the preference many households have for the education of boys over girls, with girls' education often deemed less important (Rose and Al Samarrai, 2001; Boyle et al., 2002). Traditionally, girls in developing contexts are assigned more chores, which must be completed both before and after school, parents prioritising a son's learning as they feel that this is a better investment (Kirk, 2006; Mitik and Decaluwe, 2009). This dynamic around roles and expectation, coupled with the divergent level of engagement and investment between boys' and girls' education, often determines relative success rates across the genders (Kirk, 2006). Boyle et al., (2002, p.46) suggest that households in their study of Reaching the poor: the 'cost' of sending children to school conducted in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia tended to see boys education bringing future economic rewards, which was not the case with girls (whose futures were expected to be lie in family care and marriage). These studies suggest that educating a girl is often seen as a poor investment because the girl will marry and leave home, bringing the benefits of education to the husband's family rather than to her own.

Studies conducted in Ghana by Johnson and Kyle (2001) and by Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang (2004) also found that girls were generally disadvantaged compared to boys in terms of education access and provision, and that the probability of attending school was further reduced for girls living in rural and peripheral areas. Similarly, in a qualitative study on Family decision-making and girls' access to primary schooling in Ghana's Eastern Region, Yeboah (1997) found that although there was some favouring of boys over girls, gender only became an issue for parents when they were compelled to decide between a daughter's and a son's enrolment in school. Yeboah (1997) further asserts that culture, quality of school, gender, and perception of which child is most likely to look after his or her parent in old age are critical variables in family decision-making around girls' education. In a study of Parental attitude towards Girl-Child Education in Awutu-Effutu-Senya District of Ghana, Mensah (2001, p.9) contended that there is a belief that when a parent's finances are at a low ebb, it is the young girl not the young boy whose education must be curtailed. The findings from all of these studies suggest that financial constraints faced by some parents make them give priority to boys' education. This reasoning presupposes that the opportunity costs of educating girls are likely to be higher and benefits or economic returns more tenuous than for boys. In addition, Obeng (2002, p.546) noted that in some Ghanaian communities, parents' fear of their daughters' pregnancy before they get married results in girls being given into marriage before finishing school. From the foregoing, we can surmise that girls tend to have less access to education than their brothers. This has implications for they grow up to become mothers themselves, as they are less likely to be in a position to assist with their children's studies, becoming a self- filling situation.

This section has highlighted the importance of looking at parental involvement as a context-specific concept. In particular, in rural Ghana, the term 'parent' extends beyond

the biological parent to wider family and community networks in part because of seasonal migration. It raises concerns about rural poverty linked to extended family with negative consequences for children. Finally, it highlights an inter-generational cycle of gendered inequalities that limits mothers' and grandmothers' involvement in children's education.

2.2 Forms of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in education and the school is a concern both in developed and developing contexts. It takes different forms across contexts. The literature offers examples of the activities parents undertake in different regions of the world (participation based in school, at home and between teachers and parents see for example (Epstein, 2001; Edge et al., 2009).

Parental involvement is a complex concept meaning different things and practices to different groups in different contexts (Bridgemohan, 2002, p.1; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Jeynes, 2010, p.749). Consequently, it has been argued that, like 'parent' there is no universally agreed definition of parental involvement (Jovett and Baginsky, 1991; Seitsinger et al, 2008; Singh et al., 1995). Jovett and Baginsky (1991) contend that, the study of what is described as parental involvement is, of necessity, complex owing to the wide variation in definitions and practices. Nevertheless, an awareness of the variation in terms of definitions and practices may serve to clarify conflicting perceptions of what involvement is.

While some writers emphasise parental involvement on several dynamic levels such as pupil-parent, parent-teacher, and pupil-teacher relations (McNeal, 1999; Pena, 2000), others conceptualise it as household use and investment of resources in their children's schooling that may be manifested within or outside the school (Drummond

and Stipek, 2004; Cheng and Powell, 2007). Parental involvement is also considered to be engagement in educational matters whose degree and format is defined by the school (Symeou, 2001). According to Symeou (2001), the operationalisation of involvement tends to be in more individualistic terms through voluntary work and attendance at school events for the benefit of one's own child. From the foregoing, much of the literature about forms of parental involvement covers the community as well as individual which is the focus of this study.

Much of the literature on parental involvement in the developed countries focuses on the role of parents both at school and at home in directly supporting their children's academic development (Holloway et al., 2008; Tao et al., 2008). Numerous studies have shown that parents are more likely to be involved with their children's education at home rather than at school (Lee and Bowen, 2006). Research has also demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement at home and a range of school-related outcomes, including academic achievement, school engagement and socio-emotional adjustment (Izzo et al., 1999). For example, parental involvement in activities at home such as checking homework, communicating about school, and reading with children have been shown to be related to positive outcomes amongst minority students in the United States of America (Sui-Chu and Willms, 1996; Jeynes, 2003). Conversely, a significant proportion of the literature on parental involvement in developing countries focuses on engagement in issues related to school-based management and administration (school governance issues). In Africa, specifically, the literature places greater emphasis on parental roles in financing education and participation in school decision-making as opposed to parental involvement in the child's learning per se (Tao et al., 2008). This raises concerns about the facilitation of the various forms of responsibilities and relationships of parental involvement.

This section shows an overlap between the domestic and the public spheres as it involves the same people. Factors influential in one are therefore also influential on the other which is what I go on to show in the data and discuss in the next section.

2.2 i Interconnectedness

While the previous section has explored specific forms of parental involvement, many theorists have focused on the importance of recognising the interconnectedness of schools, parents and communities (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Bronferbrenner, 1979, 1986, 2000). For a better appreciation of parental involvement in schooling, one must begin with an examination of the inter-connectedness among those entities. Rather than being the preserve or exclusive role of schools, education is a shared responsibility among parents, schools, communities and others (Bronferbrenner, 1979, 1986, 2000; Epstein, 1995; 2001). Recognition of this interconnectedness also draws attention to the nature and quality of the relationships that exist among parents, schools and communities.

For Epstein (2001), the overlapping spheres of influence addresses this interconnectedness highlighting how the different layers (parents, schools and communities) are linked or connected and the dynamics between these different partners and structures. It posits that parental involvement in education is a joint effort of teachers, pupils, parents and the local communities and central goals such as academic success, are of mutual interest to people in each of these institutions, and are best achieved through collaboration and support (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Epstein et al., 2002). At the centre of the model is located the pupil. According to the framework, the collaboration between the school and parents has great potential for making children do better in school and in life, for empowering parents, for improving teacher morale, for making schools get better and for communities to grow (Epstein, 2001).

In relation to the context of Ghana, there are several factors impeding the collaboration between school and parents, especially in rural Ghana including poor educational backgrounds. Low literacy and limited formal education constrain parents' ability to fully engage with school even though they have the willingness to assist with their children's learning (Adam, 2005; Dampson and Mensah, 2010). Low level proficiency in English language is another barrier in rural Ghana (Adam, 2005; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). Although parents are not obliged to communicate in English at most official fora (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001), that is the preferred medium. However, parents may have incomplete command of the language of communication in school as the result of increasing mobility of the teaching staff (GES, 2001; Gyan, 2007). To foster wider collaboration or partnership between school and parents, the greatest responsibility rests with schools (Weishew and Penk, 1993) this is because it is the schools that have the professional skills for designing, identifying and implementing appropriate models and associated practices of partnership between parents and schools which can achieve success (Bojuwoye, 2009). Epstein (1995) suggests that schools and teachers are more important in fostering collaboration in parental involvement as the schools have the professional skills to assist the children. Specifically, Epstein (1995, 2001) suggests that schools and teachers need to provide special training for parents, inculcate family life into what is being taught in the classroom, make information and ideas available to parents about how best to assist students at home with school work and other school connected activities, communicate with parents about the academic progress of their children, and extend invitations to them to attend PTA, SMC and other school-wide events, making it easy for parents to participate by giving them meaningful roles in school decisions, explaining to parents that their involvement is needed and valued.

This section has highlighted the importance of interconnectedness of the school, family and community working together to meet the needs of children through collaboration and support which is the interest of this study. Epstein's (1995, 2001) overlapping spheres of influence framework emphasises interconnectedness between school, family and community which suggest that parents and teachers benefit from having more time to talk and share their views on children's academic performance and school improvement.

2.2 ii Relational Aspects of Parental Involvement

This section focuses on relationships as these are part of the idea of interconnectedness and overlapping spheres of influence between school, family and community as discussed in the previous section. This literature is particularly relevant to the first research question which focuses on barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in school. According to Christenson (2004), teachers who view parents as obstacles rather than as supporters or collaborators in the educational process deny opportunities for parental involvement in the schooling of their children and also prevent the school from benefiting from community support (Christenson, 2004).

Intimidation of parents is a source of confrontation between parents and teachers and is something that can undermine involvement (PROBE, 1999; Vasavi, 2003). In Ghana, there are reports of verbal abuse and intimidation of parents in school (Gyan, 2007; Alhassan and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010). A school climate that does not make families feel welcomed, respected, valued, and cherished stands the peril of excluding parents in the educational activities of the school. On the whole, teacher practices have a way of affecting the involvement of parents; parents are more eager to engage in the education of their children and feel more positive about their capabilities to help when teachers are able to make parental involvement an essential part in their teaching

practices. Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) have argued that the teacher invitation for parental involvement lead to more student time on homework and enhance student performance.

As part of dealing with relational aspects in parental involvement, Torre and Murphy (2016) in their study of Community of parental engagement: new foundations for school leaders' work conducted in the United Kingdom, suggest that efforts must be made to change parent and teacher attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. They posit that school leaders and teachers must have welcoming attitudes and take responsibility for reaching out to parents to build strong relationships. Positive and loving relationships between parents and children must be forged. Furthermore, Torre and Murphy (2016) indicate that the school staff should demonstrate respect through their interactions with parents, value their views, suggestions and concerns and ensure that communication occurs on ongoing basis to provide for more dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect, care and trusting relationships. Again, Torre and Murphy (2016) suggest that communities of engagement must be based on relationships between educators, students, parents and community members and so must necessarily be context-specific. According to them, the major step to ensuring effective community engagement is for school leaders and teachers to take the necessary steps to learn from parents and family members about how they can engage with their children and this must be based on mutual respect and caring relationship before stakeholders can become authentic contributors and members.

School practices such as use of corporal punishment for example caning has implication for parental involvement in children's schooling (PROBE, 1999; Boakye, 2001). In their study on Teachers and Access to Schooling conducted in Ghana, Alhassan and Adzahlie-Mensah (2010, p.10) found that if a child offends, he/she is

assembled before the class members and is given strokes of canes on the buttocks in the case of a boy and in the case of a girl in the palm even though the Ghana Education Service (GES) regulation frowns on it

In sum, this section has explored the nature and quality of the relationships which are part of the idea of interconnectedness and overlapping spheres of influence between school, family and community. It has identified the practice of corporal punishment and intimidation of parents as potential source of misunderstanding between parents and school authorities and as something that could undermine involvement. It can also flag issues of equity which is what I move on to next.

2.3 Socio-Economic Factors

This section focuses on socio-economic factors which is again relevant to the first research question as this addresses the specific barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in school. Parents are differently positioned as socio-economic factors constrain involvement in many ways (Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Ngorosho, 2009; Gazeley, 2012). In this section, I begin by discussing the home environment. I also discuss costs linked to schooling. Baquedano-Lopez et al., (2013) stipulate that families' lives are deeply shaped by inequality and argue that schools often fail to acknowledge or understand this but instead perpetuate these inequalities. This raises questions of the power between schools. In the context of rural Ghana, specific barriers as discussed in the next two sections below included socio-economic factors such as the cost of equipping children to attend school but also the loss of income to the family.

2.3 i The Home Learning Environment

The home environment is one of the most important potential contributors to learning interactions in the home, including parent involvement in school learning, parents' socioeconomic status, material resources and housing variables (Cameron and Williams, 2005; Sirin, 2005; Ngorosho, 2009). There are more fundamental considerations in rural communities in developing contexts and there is a continuum of involvement that begins with basic parental decisions as to whether to send a child to school or not. I look at whether or not parents are able to provide an enabling environment conducive to home learning in developing contexts including in rural Ghana.

Williams and Rask (2003) suggest that in developed countries, stimulation in the home has influences on children's literacy development. Their research set out to identify factors that enable children to improve their literacy by looking at the family environment and the way it functions. Their findings reveal the significance of the influence of the pre-school environments on the beginnings of literacy. Providing learning materials such as books and toys in the home is a critical factor in terms of the child's cognitive development in that they not only support learning but also enhance language development (Williams and Rask, 2003). However, in developing countries, the frequent lack of libraries and reading materials in the home makes learning much more difficult for children (Magara, 2005).

An important way in which parents can help their children achieve academic success is by assisting with homework. Evidence in rural Ghana reveals that most parents cannot read and write by themselves (Norton et al., 1995; GLSS, 2008; Donkor, 2010). However, it has been found that while many children in rural contexts do receive such help, it is often from siblings, relatives or other literate community members rather than

a parent, and sometimes provided in return for some kind of payment (Care International, 2003; Hashim, 2005). This highlights the importance of the extended family and community networks as well as interconnectedness in parental involvement in children's home learning in Ghana.

2.3 ii Costs specially linked to Schooling

In poor rural contexts, parental involvement at its most basic level involves sending the child to school or not (Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Avotri, 2000; Oduro, 2000; Rose and Al Samarrai, 2001). The key factor that hampers poor households' demand for schooling include socio-economic factors involving the weighing up of loss of income to the family, cost of equipping children to attend school and actual cost of schooling. These barriers relate to social inequalities.

a) The weighing up loss of Income to the Family

The opportunity cost of schooling does influence household schooling (Mason and Rozelle, 1998). In rural communities where the major economic activity is subsistence agriculture, the opportunity cost of schooling to households would relate to lost earning from child's labour in agriculture or in home productive activities (Bray, 1996; Blunch and Verner, 2000). This type of cost increases with age and gender of the child. Older siblings are more likely to be made to work to support younger siblings, while girls are more likely to be made to take care of younger siblings or support parents in household chores than boys and so have lower opportunity costs (Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Mason and Rozelle, 1998). In farming communities in particular, parents expressly requested that teachers allow them to take their children out of school to take care of their younger siblings so that the adults could work on the farm for family sustenance. Such practices are driven by economic need as well as a culture of intergenerational obligation, support and reciprocity (Keiland and Toro, 2006). Indeed,

there is a sense of obligation that a child should support economic need (Keiland and Toro, 2006). This implies that for some parents, the benefits of education are not gauged in terms of the merits to the child alone, but also with regard to the well-being of the whole households (Akyeampong et al., 2007). Besides, understanding the nature of children's time, not just its value, but the alternative use of their time is significant to their schooling decisions – particularly when school activities clash with major economic activity that is important to the household survival. For example, in the fishing and farming rural communities in Africa, it is not uncommon for children to absent themselves from school due to bumper fish harvest or during the planting and harvesting seasons (Brown, 2005). Pryor and Ampiah (2003) in a study of education in a Ghanaian village noted that children attended school infrequently because they felt the returns were low. Children are important family resources, at harvesting times in rural areas, for example, children are often needed to work and when exams coincide with labour demands they can have detrimental effects on pupil performance (Fentiman, Hall and Bundy, 1999). The need for children to work is often seasonal and fluctuating, depending not only on agricultural season, but also on family crises or illness, when older siblings and girls in particular are withdrawn from school to look after other family members (Care International, 2003; Hashim, 2005). Depending on the nature of work, child labour can increase pressure to provide financial support for the child's schooling and/or that of siblings, and many children both work and attend school (Canagarahaj and Coulombe, 1997; Fentiman, Hall, and Bundy, 1999, p.340).

b) Cost of equipping children to go to School

Economic constraints affect households' decision to enrol a child in school. In Tanzania, Ngorosho (2009) found that the majority of parents in the research community had no regular income, depending mainly on small scale agriculture, trading, and fishing activities, and were thus unable to afford basic learning materials

for children in school. Researchers such as Shultz (1988) and Mcloyd (1990) have observed that economic hardship, which is more prevalent in lone-parent families reduces opportunities for involvement in education. In the context of Ghana, in households that are headed by lone parents, economic problems prevent them from participating in school activities even if they are interested (Gyan, 2007; Quartey, 2007). Additionally, in a study on the Changing role of the family in the Ghanaian economy, Quartey (2007, p.73) found that most women particularly single-mothers experienced greater economic difficulties. It may be concluded that the inability of parents to involve themselves in their children's schooling can be attributed in part to straitened economic circumstances (Mcloyd, 1990; Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2004).

c) Actual cost of schooling

The decisions made by parents in poor households about whether or not to send a child to school are influenced by the cost of schooling (Mason and Rozelle, 1998; Rose and Al Samarrai, 2001). The direct cost such as school fees, extra classes, food at school, uniforms and stationery increase as children progress to higher grades (Mason and Rozelle, 1998). Thus, poor households with two or more children in school may find the direct cost of schooling a burden on the household). In a study conducted in Ethiopia, Rose and Al Samarrai (2001) found that parents had difficulties in providing children with exercise books, pens and the necessary clothing for school. This influenced whether children could enrol or were withdrawn from the first grade. In Boyle et al., (2002) research in some areas of Uganda and Zambia, the inability of parents to provide exercise books, pens and uniform meant children withdrawn from school for periods of time, however temporarily. In Ghana, Avotri (2000) and Oduro (2000) noted that direct cost and indirect costs are the main factors affecting access to schooling. Even though the introduction of the capitation grant policy in Ghana in 2005 made public school fee 'free', other explicit direct costs such as feeding at school and

uniforms constitute a barrier to access to schooling to poor households (Akyeampong et al., 2007).

In sum, the section shows the contextualised nature of parental involvement in rural Ghana with many parents unable to assist with their children's home learning due to material demands. Again, it identifies specific barriers to parental involvement as the weighing up loss of income to the family but also the cost of equipping children to attend school.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the importance of looking at parental involvement as a context-specific concept. In particular, in rural Ghana, the term 'parent' extends beyond the biological parent to wider family and community networks in part because of seasonal migration and identifies an inter-generational cycle of gendered inequalities that limits mothers' and grandmothers' involvement in children's education. Secondly, it has explored the nature and quality of the relationships which are part of the idea of interconnectedness and overlapping spheres of influence between school, family and community which is shaped by relational matters which play out in/across for both formal and informal and involves equity issues. This chapter has also focused on the literature most relevant to Research Question 1 which addresses the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in school. It has identified the practice of corporal punishment and intimidation of parents as potential source of misunderstanding between parents and school authorities and as something that could undermine involvement. Thirdly, in rural Ghana, there is tension between education and economic imperatives – with literacy and livelihood activities all important and some parents unable to assist with their children's home learning due to material demands. It identifies specific barriers to parental involvement as the weighing up loss of income to

the family but also the cost of equipping children to attend school. Lastly, it highlights that parental involvement needs to be recognised as a social construction, involving different stakeholders. These are all central to decentralisation which explicitly invites local participation which is dealt with in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Parental Involvement in Formal Governance Structures within a Decentralised System

3.0 Introduction to Chapter 3

In this chapter, I review the literature relevant to the second and third research questions: What are the fora for parental involvement (Research Question 2) and What forms of involvement are parents engaged in at the school (Research Question 3)? I focus on involvement in the formal governance structures operating in the SMC and PTA because these claim to open spaces for parental involvement in school. I begin by reviewing literature on decentralisation in Ghana and the roles given to parents within these systems in the context of Ghana. Next, I discuss the SMC and PTA as formal structures in developing contexts such as Ghana as these are key fora for parental involvement. Also, I look at the issue of language used within the formal fora of school governance structures in Ghana. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how parental involvement has been conceptualised within this study.

3.1 Decentralisation

Any discussion on parental involvement in Ghana must be considered in the context of education decentralisation policy and located in the general decentralisation literature. However, the literature is very broad and for the purpose of the present research study, I draw out those strands that are most relevant to a study of parental involvement, I also consider why a study that covers these issues is so important and relevant in the Ghanaian context.

Decentralisation has been on the rise for about three decades in both developed and developing contexts (Kohl, 2003). It has become synonymous with reforms in

governance in many developing countries (Litvack et al., 1998). However, the gap between decentralisation policy and practice is usually wide in many developing country systems. The imbalances and disparities in human resource capacity in poor countries can actually make decentralisation exacerbate inequities in society (Naidoo, 2002; De Grauwe et al., 2005). Over the last three decades, there has emerged a global trend towards political decentralisation and the empowerment of local authorities that continues to gain strength (World Bank, 2000; Faguet and Sanchez, 2006; Robinson, 2007; Essuman, 2008). Decentralisation is the transfer of the responsibility for planning, decision-making and administrative authority from central government to its field organisations (Litvack et al., 1998). However, this does not necessarily mean the relinquishing of all forms of control from the central government and administration (De Grauwe et al., 2005). As with general decentralisation, education decentralisation has been defined in terms of a shift in location and authority in respect of those who govern, and the transfer of authority from the central location and level of sector administration to the local level (Welsh and McGinn, 1998).

The process of decentralisation in Ghana was initiated with the 1988 reforms, which saw creation of 85 districts in the 10 regions. The 1992 constitution states that “Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralised” (1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 240), further endorsing this process of decentralisation. The Ghana Education Service (GES) began to undertake decentralisation of pre-tertiary education around 1988. This saw the responsibility and authority over the management of education, resources and services devolve to the districts and ultimately to school level.

The Government of Ghana (GOG) in 1988 embarked on the implementation of a comprehensive decentralisation policy and a local government reform programme with

the aim of establishing efficient decentralised government machinery to provide a strong support for participatory, balanced and sustainable development. The policy sought to establish a decentralised administrative system through the transfer of authority, functions, resources and competencies from the Central Government represented by the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to the sub-national institutions such as the Regional Co-ordinating Councils and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). The primary aim of the policy was to enhance their capacity to plan, manage and monitor social, spatial and economic development within their communities (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLG&RD), 1988).

Decentralisation in education in Ghana began with the implementation of the 1951 Accelerated Education Development Plan (AEDP). The Education ACT of 1961 and the local Governance ACT of 1988 made each district or community responsible for providing and maintaining basic school infrastructure. Education decentralisation has been presented as a vehicle for strengthening management efficiency and accountability by involving critical decision-making at the district level (GOG, 2000). From the foregoing, Ghanaian education decentralisation policy has identified parental involvement as central element through formal governance structures (Pryor, 2005; Akyeampong et al., 2007). It has also identified specific forms associated with decentralisation which addresses RQ 3.

3.2 The SMC and PTA as Key Fora within Governance Structures

Research Question 2 focuses on key fora and this section will focus on the SMC and PTA as two of these. Many countries have established educational laws and policies to include parents in the governance of schools (Arnott and Raab, 2000; Sliwka and Istance, 2006; Dunne et al., 2007; Hill and Taylor, 2014). In this section, I look at formal

governance structures involving parents in developed and developing contexts but also Ghana to reflect the importance of contextual matters in school governance.

In developed countries, parental involvement in formal governance structures was in response to wider concerns about social and democratic governance (World Bank, 2000; Robinson, 2007). For example, in England, each maintained school has its own governing body representing a wide range of different individuals and interest groups (Sliwka and Istance, 2006). In between nine and 20 per cent of school governors are volunteers and elected or appointed (Sliwka and Istance, 2006). This is different in developing contexts. These school governing boards are involved in decision-making in a wide range of areas. They manage the school budget, make curricula decisions, and they report a school's examination results to parents and others. They play a core role in staffing a school, dealing with new appointments, staff appraisal and governance (Sliwka and Istance, 2006).

In developing countries, PTAs have largely been found to provide financial (e.g. PTA subscriptions) or in-kind contributions such as materials and labour to build or maintain school buildings rather than any meaningful engagement in the education decision-making process (see for example, Geo-Jaja, 2004, p. 309 [in relation to Nigeria]; Chikoko, 2007, p.36 [in relation to Zimbabwe]). Parental monetary support includes fees, levies and fundraising activities. These activities provide the means to purchase textbooks or supplement teachers' salaries or they can be used to finance classroom construction or bereavement packages. Non-monetary support covers a wide range of activities from attending school events and visits, committees and parent teacher association meetings, to providing labour for school construction and maintenance (Watt, 2001; Adam, 2005; Kamba, 2010). Consequently, parents' participation tends to be limited to financial and material aspects.

Previous research has shown that there is unequal access to participation in bodies such as SMCs and PTAs by socio-economic status and gender (Dunne et al., 2007). In developing countries, the local elite and relatively more highly educated community members tend to take on the role of brokers of decision-making and, through their actions, close up the space for representation and participation in the affairs of the school by a more inclusive group of community members (Kingdon et al., 2014). In a review of decentralisation policy and practices in six sub-Saharan African countries (Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi and Zimbabwe), Dunne et al., (2007) conclude that core education decisions are hardly ever decentralised in a way that encourages local community participation in decision-making. Dunne et al., (2007) conclude that there has been insufficient research on how parents and community partners actively collaborate with the school to address issues of access, attendance, completion, and other local education problems.

Most educational systems in developing countries are characterised by tension and conflict as PTA executives and SMC jostle one another for dominance in the running of the school (Dunne et al., 2007; Edge et al., 2010). The situation undermines not only efficiency in school management but also effectiveness of the two bodies (Dunne et al., 2007; World Bank, 2008; Tatlah and Igbal, 2011). Disagreement over the roles of these bodies in school governance invariably leads to confusion (Dunne et al., 2007; Edge et al., 2010). In their study of four West Africa countries, De Grauwe et al., (2005) found that the relationship between SMC members and school heads was usually characterised by conflict rather than collaboration. Consequently, school governance tends to be dominated by head teachers and local political leaders who do not have sufficient resources to carry out their responsibilities (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2006). It can thus be inferred that at least in developing countries, the composition of SMC

and PTA executives do not sufficiently reflect the interests of the communities and parents of the school.

In Ghana, two important fora that emerge as particularly important for parental involvement with school communities are the SMC and PTA. The formulation of Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy saw the need to constitute the School Management Committee (SMC). It is a school-community based institution designated under the Ghana Education Service Act of 1995. The establishment of SMC is a national requirement in all public basic schools. This committee unlike the PTA is composed of the immediate stakeholders of the school in the community. The SMC aims at fostering effective community involvement and mobilisation for efficient education provision and delivery (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999). The SMC is:

The body that provides a monitoring and supervisory role in the school, to ensure that quality educational services are being provided through efficient management and equitable allocation of resources (Nkansah and Chapman, 2006, p. 509-532).

This can be linked up to the decentralisation policy of the country, which aims at bringing the decision-making process of governance to the doorsteps of the ordinary citizen through participation in all diverse ways. In Ghana, the School Governing Body (SGB) is an appendage of the SMC and involved in decision-making of financial and disciplinary issues of the school. In contrast to the SMC, the PTA is “a mechanism for building parent support for the schools and involving them in activities of their schools” (Nkansah and Chapman, 2006, pp. 509-532; Kamba, 2010). The PTA is a voluntary organisation of the parents or guardian of children at the school level (Ghana Education Service, SMC/PTA Handbook, 2001, pp. 9-11). However, it needs to be mentioned that some schools in Ghana do not have PTAs. This is due to the fact that it

is not much of a compulsion unlike the SMC. It is a forum where teachers and parents meet as partners to improve teaching and learning in the school.

In Ghana, resources from District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) are mostly used to support the provision of infrastructure at the district level while the Internally Generated Fund (IGF) at the basic school level is spent by the schools directly. In the year 2005, as in most other Less Developing Countries (LDCs), Ghana started implementing the capitation grant which enables district education managers to fund school projects at that level. However, meagre financial allocations and delays in release of funds from the centre to districts and schools continue to bedevil the implementation of that noble policy. In addition, the capacity of district assemblies to effectively manage their finances has often been in doubts (World Bank, 2004). The widespread introduction of PTAs and SMCs has served urban communities better because they have been able to muster financial capital to improve quality of some urban schools, thus widening the gap between them and rural public schools (Akyeampong, 2004, p.42).

3.3 The Language Used within Governance Structures in Ghana

The low literacy levels limit the active parental involvement in school governance (Adam, 2005; Donkor, 2010). English language is an issue in terms of home learning and it is the language used in the formal structures and therefore alien to many parents (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009) some of whom are also not literate in their own language. This is problematic if we are to promote parental involvement in these structures as communication and information flow are important factors in terms of the success of parental involvement in school governance.

In 2008, only 51 per cent of adults in Ghana were able to read and write in English or a local language. There were also substantial differences between the sexes, with just over six out of ten men, but only four out of ten women being literate (GLSS, 2008). Whilst 47 per cent of adult males are literate in both English and a local language, the corresponding figure in respect of their female counterparts is only 28 percent. There is also a disparity in literacy levels between urban and rural areas; about 70 percent of adults in towns and cities are literate, whilst only 40 percent rural dwellers are literate (GLSS, 2008). This has implications for school governance, gender dynamics and contextual issue since illiterate parents are likely to have limited participation.

English is the official language and universal medium of communication in basic schools. It is officially supplemented by five local languages, namely Twi, Fante, Ewe, Ga, and Moshi/ Dagomba (Department of State Report for Ghana, 2001; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). Adam (2005) in a study on community participation in school development in the Nanumba district of Ghana found that parents who are illiterate in the country official language, English which is often also that of tuition, feel that no one will listen to or understand their contribution at meetings. Such a limitation affects involvement in school governance. Teaching in the local language can bring communities closer to school (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009) and maximise the likelihood of parental involvement in school (Benson, 2000).

In sum, the decentralised system of education delivery in Ghana assumes an important role for the SMC and PTA in achieving educational access and quality. The chapter reveals that many of the SMC and PTA members in rural Ghana are unable to contribute fully to school governance due to their limited formal education/low literacy but also lack of training. It highlights tensions in school governance situations and the use of English language was identified as an additional barrier. It also suggests equity

issues and the need to address economic and power imbalances that exclude parents from school governance. Lastly, it has highlighted SMC and PTA as examples of overlapping spheres and evidence of interconnectedness as discussed in the previous chapter.

3.4 Conceptualising Parental Involvement in Schooling

Within this study, parental involvement is conceptualised as related to four key areas which overlap rather than being separate. The first of these to emerge from the literature reviewed is the definition of parent. The definition of 'parent' varies across cultural contexts. In Ghana, the dynamics of the extended family system make the definition of 'parent' rather fluid as it is common for children to live with relatives who are not biological parents but who assume responsibility for the upkeep of the child including their schooling. The definition of 'parent' is also linked with the impact of migration as many parents are seasonal migrants who leave their children in the care of relatives to enable them to provide for family sustenance (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999; Case, Paxson and Abledinger, 2004; Powell et al., 2006). Mothers take much of the responsibility in children's education but are constrained in their ability to be fully involved because of preference for boy child education (Yeboah, 1997; Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Awareness of such differences has fed into the development of Research Question 1 which focuses on barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in school.

A second key issue arising from the literature review is the contextually located nature of parental involvement with expectations and capacity varying across different contexts and involving overlapping spheres of influence between school, family and community (Epstein, 1995, 2001). The literature on parental involvement in the developed countries focuses on the role of the parents operating within the school and

at home, often in directly supporting their child's academic development (Holloway et al., 2008; Tao et al., 2008). Conversely, a significant proportion of the literature on parental involvement in developing countries focuses on parental engagement in issues related to school-based management and administration. This has placed a greater emphasis on parental roles in financing education and participation in school decision-making as opposed to parental involvement in the child's learning per se (Tao et al., 2008, p.6). This suggests that parental involvement needs to be understood in context while also highlighting that parental involvement needs to be recognised as a social construction, involving different stakeholders and forums, including those linked to governance and infrastructure and as having both individual and collective functions. This section is particularly pertinent to Research Question 3 which recognises different forms of involvement.

One important issue raised in the literature reviewed is that parental involvement is constrained by various factors and barriers (reflected in Research Question 1). This relates to social inequalities which in the context of rural Ghana hamper poor parents' involvement in basic education. Many parents cannot read and write making it difficult to assist with their children's homework (Norton et al., 1995; GLSS, 2008). Many parents are so poor that they cannot provide basic necessities for learning at home (Adam, 2005; Hashim, 2005). Schooling costs in particular also affect parental involvement (Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Oduro, 2000; Avotri, 2000; Dei, 2004; Adam, 2005). The literature addresses issues around relationships. It reveals verbal abuse and the practice of corporal punishment to children in school. These barriers also affect parental involvement in governance structures in developing contexts. In the context of Ghana, language policy was identified as a barrier to governance issues (Adam, 2005; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009; Donkor, 2010).

The last key area arising from this literature is that the decentralised governance policy in Ghana specifies the SMC as a formal governance structure particularly in matters of financial management, school and teacher discipline and the PTA as a forum for establishing school-community relations and involved in fund-raising activities for school (PTA/SMC Role – GES, 2001; Nkansah and Chapman, 2006). It also addresses inter-relatedness among PTA and SMC as both have school, community and parent representation. This section is particularly relevant to Research Question 2 which focuses on key fora for parental involvement in school.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.0 Introduction to chapter 4

In this chapter, I describe and explain the methodology and methods employed in this study. My choice of methodology was guided by the research questions and took into consideration issues associated with data collection methods. It is also informed by my understanding of parental involvement as outlined in the conceptual framework developed in chapters two and three. In this chapter, I provide the rationale for the choice of a methodological framework and research design. I describe the research process in terms of research location and participants, explain why the case study approach was adopted, and detail the strategies used to collect data, the ethical implications and the data analysis.

4.1 Methodological Approach

The choice of design in any research study should be appropriate to the issue under investigation. The inquiry should be informed by the researcher's philosophical standpoint and basic assumptions about social reality and the questions of epistemology (Sikes, 2004). Ontology relates to the nature and essence of this in the social world:

A researcher's ontological assumptions relate to his/her perception of social reality or part of it. Researchers could view social reality as external, independent, given and objectively real or socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thought as expressed through language (Sikes, 2004, p.20).

Parental involvement is a social construction as I see it, which means a particular type of approach to data collection. In addition as this research focuses on different structures and participants working together in networks, it is necessary for me to explore multiple perspectives. This means that it would not be appropriate for me to

work with the positivist assumption that the researcher can distance or detach him or herself from the research process or the interpretation of research findings (Struwig and Stead, 2001). Rather, I will work within the interpretive paradigm influenced by the philosophical stance that ‘the view of the world that we see around us is the creation of the mind... reality is better experienced through our preconceptions and beliefs’ (Wallisman, 2005, p. 170).

I used an interpretive approach in this study as my main objective was “to understand and interpret social situations by becoming part of the situations or close to the people involved with them, to listen to their stories, and to share their perceptions and experiences” (McFarlane, 2000, p.27). As Taylor and Bogdan (1998, p.3) assert, the interpretive tradition works towards developing an understanding of the participants’ own view of his or her experience of social reality. Accordingly, in my study, I sought to explore parental involvement in their children’s school. I thus visited my selected study schools and spoke to all the stakeholders, namely parents, SMC members, PTA members, and heads of school. From this experience I learnt that establishing a trusting relationship between the participants and myself was crucial if I wanted to understand their world: therefore I had to put considerable effort into this. It was therefore necessary to adopt qualitative research approach that most suited this objective to gathering relevant data.

The choice of a qualitative approach was in line with the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying knowledge construction (Gray, 2004; Sikes, 2004). Moreover, it allowed the use of multiple methods of collecting data (i.e. focus group, interview, and documentary search) from parents and the community in their natural setting – a defined geographical area – in order to fulfil the aims of the study (Sikes, 2004; Gribick, 2007).

A major criticism levelled against qualitative design is the issue of subjectivity and the difficulty in determining the authenticity of findings. However, Miles and Huberman (1994) observe that triangulation in qualitative design ensures validity. In this regard, I made an attempt not only to explore individual experiences, but also the varied meanings and interpretations of the different actors, SMC, PTA, parents, teachers and head teachers in the field, using relevant strategies and techniques to elicit the necessary information.

4.2 The Case Study Approach

The objective of this study was to explore different stakeholders' perspectives on parental involvement in basic education. During data collection, I chose to employ a case study for my exploration of parental involvement in two public basic schools in Effutu Municipality. According to Yin (2009), the case study design facilitates an empirical inquiry well suited to investigating a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real life context particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly drawn (Yin, 2009, p.18). Parental-school involvement may be considered to be the contemporary phenomenon, as it has gained a considerable place in the decentralisation of school governance (Arnott and Raab, 2000; De Grauwe et al., 2005; Robinson, 2007).

In the research methods literature on the case study, a 'case' may be theoretical, or empirical or both; it may be a relatively bounded object or a process; and it may be generic and universal or specific in some way (Ragin and Becker, 1992, pp.1-18; Yin, 2009). By this definition, my research is a qualitative study of parental involvement in basic education in rural Ghana with the SMC and PTA as school governing structures for parents also being presented as case studies. This supports the idea that there are case studies within a broader case (Yin, 2003). The case focuses in particular on how

the policy on parental involvement has been implemented in Effutu Municipality in terms of the relational aspects between parents and school.

It has been argued that the main problem with case studies is the difficulty of extrapolating generalisations (see Cohen et al., 2001; Muijs, 2004) as such studies often concentrate on a specific instance or small number of instances of a phenomenon and involve a relatively small sample size (Cohen et al., 2001; Denscombe, 2008). Other researchers have argued, however, that there are other strengths. For example, according to Marshall and Rossman (2006), the case study takes the researcher into the setting to spend time in collecting extensive data or details using multiple instruments to develop in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. One of the major reasons for opting for the case study approach is that quite a small number of carefully selected respondents in a specific instance can provide information that is close up and highly context-specific (Yin, 2003; Kusi, 2012). This was helpful for this study as the focus was on parental involvement in basic education in two school communities in rural Ghana. The case study can also be more widely relevant and transferable across contexts (Thomas, 2011). For example, the question of whether it is the school or the parent that is 'hard to reach' is applicable to both Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents in schools in England as argued by Crozier and Davies, 2007 but equally to those in this study in Effutu Municipality of Ghana.

Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) state that all research involves the collection of data, whether it is through reading, observation, interviews, measurement, asking questions, narratives or a combination of these approaches. The qualitative researcher is able to employ a variety of techniques for gathering information (Cohen et al., 2000) especially when utilising a case study approach, whose strength lies in the use of multiple data collection methods and a variety of data sources (Merriam, 1988). In this

study, qualitative interview, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis were used as techniques, all being suitable for this type of investigation.

Denscombe (2003) argues that the use of multiple methods to collect data enables the data to be validated through triangulation. Tellis (1997) states that triangulation, increases the reliability of data and the process of gathering it as it serves to corroborate data gathered from other sources. According to Feagin et al., (1991), case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed as it is designed to elicit details from the view point of the participants using multiple sources of data.

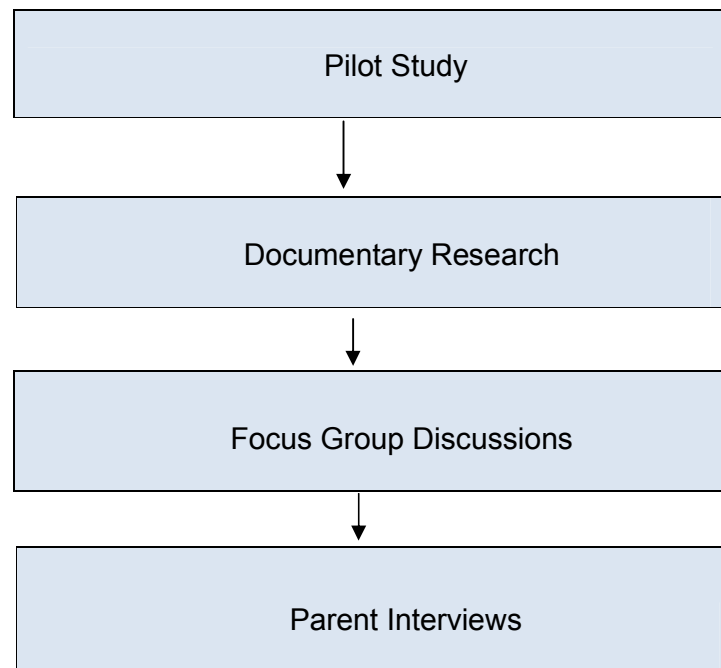
4.3 Stages in the Research Design

This section addresses the research design adopted for the study. I discuss the means by which the questions were approached and how the resulting data addressed the focus of the study. In determining the means of data collection, I gave due consideration to my research questions, and the methods and instruments that would best help me elicit the information. The data collection methods I finally decided upon were interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary search.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004) assert that the research design is something that can be thought of as appropriate procedure or guidelines for conducting a study. They also contend that the success of a research study depends critically on its being well designed, which means that the researcher has to be alert to the importance of design from the outset (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004). The research design also involves the process of focusing on one's perspective for the purpose of a particular study (Babbie, 2007). Conventionally, such a design is made up of four key components: research questions, determination of the data to be collected, data collection methods, and data

analysis (Creswell, 2005). It is therefore a plan of how one intends to conduct a study and reach some conclusions. The different stages of the research design – pilot study, documentary research, focus group discussion and parent interviews were as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Flow Chart showing various Stages of Research Design



4.3i Stage 1: Pilot Study

Having gained the approval of my supervisors, I conducted a pilot study in October 2012. The essence of the pilot was to try out the research techniques and methods which I had in mind, seeing how well they worked in practice and, if necessary, modify my plans accordingly. I piloted both focus group discussion and parent interview approaches to data collection. Bell (2005, p.167) advises that, “People who agree to be interviewed deserve some consideration and so you will need to fit in with their plans, however inconvenient they may be for you” In the light of this, the day, time and venue

for the pilot focus group and pilot interview were discussed and arranged with the participants beforehand.

a) Pilot Focus Group Discussion

I held my first focus group discussion with one teacher, one PTA member, and one SMC member from a school in a municipality not in the proposed study area for the main research project. My aim was to examine in detail what the group thought and felt about the topic 'parental involvement in basic education' which was intended as general a guide for the main research study.

On the day of the pilot focus group discussion, participants were picked up at their homes and taken to my office. When asked to express a preference for their choice of venue, everyone had agreed my office was the ideal place since it was spacious, comfortable, neutral, quiet and not located near anyone's place of work or residence. To reduce excessive disruptions, I put an 'engaged' sign on my office door. I then served the participants with soft drinks as is the custom in sub-Saharan Africa when receiving visitors. I switched the air-conditioning on and ensured that the seating arrangements were in order for the discussion. All these preparations were geared toward putting the participants at ease. I had scheduled the focus group discussions to last for a maximum of an hour and a half.

The specific interview questions I asked were:

1. What are the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in the case study schools?
2. What are the fora for parental involvement?
3. What forms of parental involvement occurred at the case study schools?
4. What kinds of involvement are the parents engaged in at the case study schools?

The focus group guide was amended to reflect feedback from the pilot study that had revealed the need to review questions three and four as participants had experienced difficulty in differentiating them. In the light of this similarity, question four was dropped

b) Pilot Parent Interviews

In selecting the parent participant, I relied on a PTA chairperson in a school in the community. I bore in mind that PTA executives knew parents very well, and that they often kept in regular contact at meetings. I requested that the PTA chairperson nominate three members who were parents and the participant was purposely approached, dependent on availability, interest and willingness to be interviewed.

With the approval of my supervisors, I set up an interview with a parent as part of the pilot study in October, 2012. When asked about a venue preference, the participant agreed to make it my office, perhaps due to its proximity to her home. In the light of this, the mutually convenient day, and time for the interview were discussed and arranged. On the appointed day, I offered the participant water and then fruit juice and lunch after the exercise. In Ghana, as a feature of our hospitality, a visitor is first served water as a gesture of a warm welcome. This had the desired effect of putting the respondent at ease, allowing us to converse naturally.

With the interview questions in front of me, I asked what the participant understood by parent and parental involvement. I enquired further about the practices of the school and its teachers or any factor that encouraged or discouraged her involvement. This led to further questions about how parental involvement in her child's school can be facilitated. Finally, I enquired about the forms of parental involvement in operation at her child's school. In the case of parent interviews, there was no amendment as the pilot study did not reveal the need to review questions.

4.3ii Stage 2: Documentary Research

Berg (2001) recommends the judicious use of written materials to support observation and interviews. However, due to the fact that documents are not prepared especially for study, the data may lack continuity and may not meet the needs of the research (Merriam, 1988). Nevertheless, documents help us to explore societies because they are “media through which social power is expressed” (Patton, 2002, p. 164). This means that by carefully examining what is included and what is left out of a policy document, we gain an insight into both explicit and implicit government intentions (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

In my quest for education policy documents, I visited the Municipal Education office and having been previously informed by colleagues in the tertiary profession that accessing document was difficult and frustrating, I considered myself lucky to be provided with all that I requested i.e., PTA and SMC handbooks, the head teacher’s and teacher’s manuals. However, its weakness lies in the occasional problems encountered in accessing documents. As the analysis of the content of written material is subject to the interpretation of the researcher, I took care in making logical inferences in the knowledge that data could be open to multiple interpretations. I examined the SMC and PTA policy documents in order to establish the type and nature of the respective envisioned roles in relation to practice (GES, SMC/PTA Roles, 2001). As I read through the documents, I noted the relevant pages and themes and entered them in my field notes. The themes were composition of PTA and SMC membership, gender equity approach, tenure of membership and executive position, powers and functions, funding and grounds for disqualification. This helped me to cross-check observations made in the research process with the stipulations of the policy documents.

4.3iii Stage 3: Focus Group Discussion

A focus group is “a type of group interview in which a researcher leads a discussion with a small group of individuals” (Johnson and Christenson, 2004, p. 115). Such a method is called a focus group” because the researcher keeps the individuals in the group focused on the topic being discussed” (Johnson and Christenson, 2004, p. 185). The focus group is particularly useful when a set of people have been working together for sometime and/or have a common purpose (Krueger and Casey, 2000). The use of a focus group or a communal setting allows interaction between members, thus yielding a wide range of responses (Cohen et al., 2000) and it has been argued that the data collected is less biased (Patton, 2002).

Kamberellis and Dimitriadis (2005) argue that focus groups privilege horizontal interactions over vertical interactions and therefore they need to ensure a non-hierarchical relationship. This involves recognising the power dynamics or relations operating within such groups. The community focus group involved SMC and PTA members and some were more educated than the others. I could see differences for those who could speak English at a better level in terms of power relations, for example, some SMC and PTA members talked about the barrier of English language and so I intentionally used a local language to enable them interact freely. Nevertheless this group involved less of a hierarchical relationship than the teacher focus group which included both teachers and head teachers even though all the teacher participants in the focus group were all educated in English and so the division in the group was less visible. However, being a head teacher and in Ghana, there is a hierarchical structure that positions teachers as subordinate. This led to some feelings of discomfort for teachers with two participants raising issues of being uncomfortable and afraid of losing control in the head teacher’s presence. In hindsight I should have

been more aware of the power dynamics within the group and I would organise the teacher and head teacher focus groups differently in retrospect.

A power dynamic also applied to me as a male lecturer from the university. It has been hinted earlier that being a lecturer had the potential to create a hierarchical relationship, as well as place a limitation on the amount of information the participants could freely provide on their parental involvement experience. For example, the head teachers and teachers in both school communities addressed me as sir/ senior tutor during the focus group. The former hurriedly arranged a meeting with the PTA, SMC and the teachers to enable me talk about my intended focus group discussions. Developing a less-hierarchical relationship with respect to my own position as a researcher was one of the ethical considerations that I addressed during the focus groups. I had to guard against my impression of superiority, appearance and composure or the seating arrangement with the teacher participants. I therefore arranged two similar seats that would enable a face-to-face interactions and good eye contact between us during the teacher focus group. These I safeguarded by constantly attending to the participants' ease of communication and trust. More importantly, I realised that I needed to be conscious of the possible effects my position could have on the interview process. Being aware of this, I took into account the issue of social positioning by adopting some interpersonal skills as discussed earlier, in order that the participants would be at ease to talk about their parental involvement experience. That I had done this was suggested when two teacher participants asked about my own experiences as a parent, the number of children I have and how I managed these commitments. I took advantage of these questions to share my own experiences as a way of building rapport.

I developed a three stage design for the focus group sessions. The first was conducted with eight community respondents drawn from the SMCs and PTAs of the case study schools. The second focus group was held with eight school respondents made up of head teachers and teachers of the two case study schools. I put SMC and PTA members in one group because they represented forums or paths of engagement in the school for parents; and teachers and head teachers in another group because they represented on the other side of the relationship. The third focus group of 16 participants comprised both community and school respondents and it was conducted after the second focus group discussion. The rationale for the third combined group was to allow interaction between community and school respondents, thus yielding a wider range of responses. It allowed for discussion of contrasting views between community and school respondents. The choice of eight participants in each group was made in accordance with the recommendation of Johnson and Christenson (2004, p.185) that a 'focus group should involve 6-12 members in a group to enable them interact freely among themselves'. The three stage design for the focus group is thus made up of community participants, school respondents and a combination of both community and school respondents

4.3iv Identification and Composition of Focus Groups

This section discusses the specific composition of the various focus groups in the study in more detail. There were two groups and these involved community participants who were members of school management committees or parent teacher associations as well as head teachers and teachers in each of the two case study schools. The inclusion of parents, community participants and school staff in the focus groups is a reflection of the overlapping spheres of influence.

Focus Group 1: Community Participants.

The first focus group round comprised the community participants with affiliation to the SMC and/or PTA. There is an overlap here as these community stakeholders include school, staff and parents.

a) Participants from the School Management Committee

Under the Ghana Education Service (GES) Act of 1995, the SMC is supposed to exercise general oversight over schools and its general areas of responsibility surround school policy, financial management and the mobilisation of both financial and physical resources (SMC/PTA Roles, 2001). The SMC is one of the various interventions intended to promote effective community partnership and involvement in the education delivery system. (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999).

As defined by the Government of Ghana in the national policy document, the Ghana Education Service(GES) Handbook, SMC/PTA Roles (2001, pp. 9-11), the SMC of each basic school should include the Municipal or District Director of Education, or his or her representative, as an ex-officio member, the head teacher, District or Municipal Assembly representative (usually an assembly member), a unit committee representative, a representative appointed by the chief of the town or village, a representative from Education unit, two members of the school's teaching staff (one each from its primary and junior high school (J HS) levels respectively), a past pupil and/or students' association representative, a representative of the PTA, and any member(s) deemed necessary, to be co-opted on an adhoc basis to perform specific functions. According to Sergiovanni (1994), this representation is all-inclusive and involves all of school stakeholders, including parents, teachers, community members and local organisations which publicly engage its members.

In selecting SMC participants for my focus groups upon approval from the Municipal Director of Education, I requested that the head teacher at each school nominate four members who were also parents. This made a total of eight, from amongst whom four were selected which ensured that each group comprised two chairpersons and two members. Additional selection criteria were that focus group participants should not have less than three years' SMC experience and be willing to participate in the study. I recognise that this approach has ethical implications and that will be discussed later.

b) Participants from the Parent Teacher Association

The PTA is basically an association of teachers and parents or guardians who seek to advance the welfare and infrastructural development of the school through fund-raising activities (GES, SMC/PTA, 2001; Nkansah and Chapman, 2006).

As defined by the Government of Ghana, PTA membership is open to all parents, guardians and teachers who have an interest in children's education (GES Handbook, SMC/PTA Roles, 2001, p. 2001). Such a criterion thus differs from SMC membership, which is mostly by appointment. The criteria for the selection of PTA participants for my focus groups were also that each group comprise two chairpersons and two members and that these participants should not have less than three years' PTA service and be willing to participate in the study. In both cases, participants fell neatly into groups of four. Details of focus group1 participants are illustrated in Table 4.1 shown below:

Table 4.1: Categories of Participant for Focus Group 1: Community Participants

Community Participants		School 1	School 2	Total
School Management Committee (SMC)	Chairperson	1	1	2
	Member	1	1	2
Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	Chairperson	1	1	2
	Member	1	1	2
	Total	4	4	8

Focus Group 2: School Participants

The second focus group round comprised a single set of head teachers and teachers. Four individuals were selected from each case study school, which made a total of eight participants in Focus Group 2. This is the school level and in terms of overlapping spheres of influence, they are also represented in the SMC and PTA.

Given that each of the two streams (primary and JHS) of all Ghanaian basic schools has its own head teacher (GES, 2001); the two streams of each of my case study schools also had a head teacher. The selection of participants for Focus Group 2 (head teachers and teachers) was made with the assistance of the Municipal Director of Education and the heads of the schools under study. This was because by the nature of the MDE's job, he or she interacted with virtually all education stakeholders in the municipality (GES, 2001): there was thus an excellent chance that he or she would have access to the individuals under consideration for inclusion as participants in my study. Accordingly, formal consent by official application which is a necessity was obtained from the Municipal Director of Education to contact heads of schools chosen as case studies. A list of 20 teachers across the two streams – A and B – at each

school was suggested by the Municipal Education Directorate following notification of my criteria for selection.

Similar to requirements in respect of SMC and PTA participants, these included teachers who had been in post for not less than three years, lived in the community (on the assumption that they offer insightful and relevant information on their experiences of parental involvement in their respective schools), and were willing to participate in the study. I thus selected participants from the 20 teachers. In the case of heads of school, all four were chosen as they all met my selection criteria. These approaches to selection are problematic and I'm aware of this and will address them later. Details of the participants for the focus group 2 in Table 4.2 are shown below:

Table 4.2: Categories of Participant for Focus Group 2: School Participants

Categories		School 1	School 2	Total
School Participants:	Head Teachers	2	2	4
	Teachers	2	2	4
	Total	4	4	8

4.3 v Planning and Conducting the Main Focus Group Discussion

I developed and piloted schedules for the focus groups. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 353), in the guided interview approach, topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance in outline form and the researcher then decides the actual sequence and wording of questions in the course of the interview. The approach allowed me to ask participants pre-determined key questions and probe the ensuing responses deeply.

Before proceeding with the focus group discussion, certain ethical dilemmas had to be addressed, namely, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity (Cohen et al., 2003). At the start of the field work I informed participants how the process of collecting data would be done and why they were being asked to contribute. I did make it clear that no one was obliged to take part. I sought permission for the focus group discussion to be audio-recorded. The aim of this was to facilitate narrative flow, help me obtain an accurate and full record of the proceedings and make it possible for me to play it back and thus improve the conduct of subsequent focus group sessions (Merriam, 1998). All participants consented to this. I made it clear that their names and comments would not be disclosed to anyone as this might compromise anonymity. After an expression of gratitude, I explained the purpose and procedure of the focus group informing the participants that the discussion would last for about one and half to two hours.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 353) state that during focus group interview, establishing trust, being sincere, maintaining eye contact and conveying meaning through rephrasing the question for clarity are all more likely to readily elicit the requisite information than a rigid approach. If the focus group participant deviates from the topic, the focus group interviewer should tactfully steer him or her back. This enables the focus group facilitator to obtain an inside view of the social phenomenon under investigation (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006, p. 353). Accordingly, I asked participants questions in turns during the focus group, utilising open- ended questions to allow them to express their individual views on the topic: parental involvement in basic education in Ghana.

Having gained permission from the University of Sussex to begin field work, I scheduled my field main focus group for the second week of May 2013. I was

convinced that although my office was spacious, holding the discussion there would be perceived as connected with the university and my authority. I therefore asked the participants to confer and decide on a convenient time and venue for the focus groups. I wrote asking permission to use the staff room which was granted by the school authorities. The first group decided to meet on Tuesday because it was not a fishing or market day for the surrounding communities. However, the second group settled on Friday which was usually a meeting day for teachers at the Municipal Education office. Nevertheless, these decisions might have been influenced by the proximity of the venue to participants' workplaces and/or the fact that they fitted most conveniently into their work schedules. Before each meeting began, the participants were provided with comfortable chairs that had been carefully arranged in advance, and were again served with soft drink. I began asking them to introduce themselves in turn and I also did likewise. I attempted to create a positive atmosphere to enable the participants to contribute to the study willingly. I asked an assistant who accompanied me to tape-record proceedings as had been previously agreed. This helped me focus on the non-verbal responses of the participants, and pay attention to their feelings and thoughts in the knowledge that I would be able to listen repeatedly to their actual utterances afterwards. I also took field notes during each session, which I later used in compiling the key themes that emerged from the focus groups.

After the introductions, we began the discussion. I kept a copy of the questions in front of me to help me make sure that I covered all the points on my interview guide. I checked off the questions as we discussed them and tried to listen carefully to participants' explanations and descriptions so that I could ask for clarifications as necessary. I enquired from the participants how they felt about the notion of parent and parental involvement in school management. Based on their responses, I then enquired as to the factors that inhibit parents' involvement in their children's school and

what the school should be doing to enhance their involvement. Based on their responses, I followed up with probing questions to elicit why they felt a certain way. This led to further questions about where and how their perceptions positively or negatively influenced parental involvement in basic education. Based on their responses, I finally enquired about the fora and forms of involvement engaged in by parents in their child's school.

Clarifying questions were also asked to gain a clearer understanding of respondents' perceptions. For example, one participant suggested that parents might act as school 'inspectors'. I called for clarification on this notion which according to the participants, meant that parents should frequently visit, monitor and supervise lessons and school activities. Participants were then asked to deliberate on the three questions below:

- 1 What are the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in the case study schools?
- 2 What are the fora for parental involvement?
- 3 What forms of involvement are parents engaged in at the case study schools?

Thus, the first focus group had its turn. The discussion was conducted in Fante, the local language. This was important as it reminds us that the majority of the community participants did not have a functional command of English. The second focus group was given the same set of questions for deliberation. This time, the discussion was conducted in English since all members had a functional command of it. This suggests that English language is a barrier to participation which is a key issue for exploration in this study. My fluency in both languages (i.e., Fante and English) made it possible to eliminate as far as possible the misinterpretations and misapprehension that can characterise research undertaken in an unfamiliar culture.

4.3vi Stage 4: Parent Interviews

The decision to undertake one-to-one interviews with parents hinged on the belief that they could provide deeper insight into their involvement in basic education and the implications of this for ensuring positive school outcomes for their children. The parent interviews thus helped me explore issues that had emerged during the focus group discussions and clarify areas in which there seemed to be contrasting viewpoints. Specific issues included enabling factors, the role of the extended family and community networks, the impact of schooling costs and the application levies on basic education but also parental illiteracy, single-parenthood; poverty and the privileging of boy child education.

Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2005, p. 27) assert that interviewing amounts to talking with people, and getting their views and their interpretation of the social context. My objective for employing the interview in my study was to encourage participants to talk freely about their experiences in respect of parental involvement. This was necessary in order to elicit a wide range of responses from the community, school staff and other stakeholders. Teachers in the study schools were also interviewed to provide deeper insight into some of the issues raised.

There are various types of interview, which range from highly structured to the unstructured conversational dialogue according to the researcher's purpose (Cohen et al., 2000). The highly structured interview requires fixed and identically worded questions (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 18). It is thus suited to the generation of quantitative data that might facilitate simple statistical analysis but is not flexible enough to be adjusted to individual circumstances (Cohen et al., 2000). On the other hand, the unstructured interview allows situational and qualitative data collection, although the data obtained tend to be less systematic and lack of comparability (Cohen

et al., 2000; Patton, 1990). The unstructured interview thus refers to a qualitative research method, in which the interviewer uses various questions and probing techniques to pursue issues thoroughly (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). This method is also referred to as “guided interview” approach (Cohen et al., 2007). As a qualitative researcher, flexibility is called for which means that the investigator should begin with a general idea and constantly bear in mind the fact that the situation can prompt a change of direction or approach (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 92). If the researcher is not aware of the kind of questions that he or she is formulating, the interviewee can change the course of the dialogue by supplying irrelevant information (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002).

Cohen et al., (2007, p. 353) identify some strengths and weaknesses of the guided interview approach: a semi-structured outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data collection, making it systematic yet flexible for each respondent; logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed; interviews remain fairly conversational and situational. The strengths and weaknesses of the guided interview used in the parent interview have been highlighted in this section.

4.3vii Identification and Characteristics of individual Parent Participants

In selecting parents, I looked at two groups: those formally involved in SMC and PTA activities; and those informally engaged in school activities, programmes and events, such as speech day and prize-giving day and inter-school competitions. For each of the two study schools, I aimed at three participants from each of the two groups of parents. Thus, altogether, I aimed at 12 parent interviewees. I also aimed at a broad representation of the term ‘parent’ and a mix of literate and illiterate individuals since available literature in Ghana supports the inclusion of all education levels in parental engagement in basic schooling (GLSS, 2008; GSS, 2010).

I identified parents for interview by means of the snowball method of sampling which is also known as network, chain referral, or reputational sampling (Blaikie, 2000). With this method, the researcher gain access to prospective study participants through contact information supplied by those already engaged (Blaikie, 2000). According to Noy (2008), in order to generate a sample consisting of a specific group of participants, the researcher must rely on the assistance of an actual informant to identify other individuals for interview, who, in turn, become informants themselves. Cohen et al., (2007) indicate that the snowball is useful in a context in which it is difficult to obtain access to a given population due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. I thus adopted this technique to select parents for the study due to difficulty in gaining access to participants with limited involvement unaided. In furtherance of this, 6 participants from Focus Group 1 were recruited as starting point for the generation of the one- on-one interview sample who were asked to identify 6 other potential participants, who were then informally involved in the chain referral process until the target of 12 was reached.

Each parent thus selected was interviewed once on the understanding that I might need to conduct a short follow-up session to clarify anything outstanding if this seemed appropriate and the participant was willing. Twelve parents were interviewed, six at School 1 and six at School 2. Of these, seven were women and five were men. There were more women in School 1 than School 2. Four were mothers and two were fathers at School 1. Two were mothers; three were fathers and one aunt (an extended family member) in School 2 which reflects the definition of a parent in this context as discussed in chapter two. Details of parent participants are as shown in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Parent Participants

Relationship to Pupil (Role)		School 1	School 2
	Mother	4	2
	Father	2	3
	Other (Aunt)	0	1

One of the key characteristics of the parents interviewed was their occupation. There were more parents involved in the fishing and farming business at school 1 whereas there were more parents in trading business at School 2. This reflects the context of the study schools as discussed in chapter one. This also relates to patterns of migration as most parents involved in the fishing business were seasonal migrants and by the nature of their occupation are away from home for sometime leaving behind extended family members to care for the children. At School 1, four participants described themselves as being lone parents, whilst in the case of School 2, four parents described themselves as being married. Details of the occupations of the parent participants at School 1 and 2 are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Occupation of Parent participants

School 1	Occupation	Number
	Farmer	2
	Fisherman	1
	Fishmonger	1
	Seamstress	1
	Mason	1
School 2	Trader	3
	Account Clerk	1
	Nurse	1
	Banker	1

4.3 viii Preparing and Conducting the Parent Interviews

Before proceeding with the main study, I telephoned those parents who had expressed willingness to participate in the research to arrange an initial meeting in order to establish a rapport with my respondents and make appointments to interview them. The purpose and procedures of the parent interview were also explained during this meeting. I informed the participants that the parent interview would take about one and half to two hours.

I sought permission to audio-record the sessions in order to enable an accurate and full record of each interview, and play it back to facilitate transcription. Wellington (2001, p. 86) identifies some strengths of this approach. First, it provides actual natural language as it was spoken. Second, it is an objective record. Third, the interviewee's contribution to the discussion is also recorded and can be reflected upon. Finally, it allows the

interviewer to concentrate, maintain eye contact and observe body languages as the interview is conducted.

I adopted a conversational style so that the participant would feel free to speak his or her mind. Such a style of interviewing was appropriate and effective because the respondents were able to relate to me in the vernacular. This technique also generated a series of responses that drew out the respondent's own interests. The parent interviews were semi-structured in format, with open-ended questions to allow participants to express individual views on their involvement in basic education. I conducted the parent interviews in the third week of August 2013 in my office at the University of Education, Winneba. This was a venue all participants agreed upon in advance. Before each session, the interviewee was served with soft drinks. In order to afford each interviewee the opportunity to interact freely and unselfconsciously, all parent respondents were interviewed separately.

With the interview questions in front of me, I enquired how each parent understood his or her involvement in the child's school. I then enquired about factors that inhibit parents' involvement in school. I then asked about how parental involvement in their child's school can be facilitated. I further enquired about fora for participation. Based on parent's responses, I followed up with probing questions on the various ways that each parent had engaged in school governance and management. This led to further questions about how school and teachers have affected parents' involvement in school.

All interviews were conducted in the local language Fante at the request of the participants. I took full notes as the parents related their experiences of involvement in the school. My role was to listen to the responses of the parents and make sense out of

them. In addition to the parent interviews, teachers in the study schools were interviewed to provide deeper insight into some of the issues raised.

4.4 Researcher Identity

Often, in qualitative research, the researcher exercises power in his or her social situation with the researched and in his or her imposition of order on data analysis, interpretation and writing up of findings (Dunne et al., 2005). I envisaged a kind of duality around my identity, first, there was my role as a researcher and second, my position as a lecturer at the university. The latter status predetermined an unequal relationship between me and the research participants, and culturally positioned me with a kind of authority and respect that had the potential to accord me the privilege of easily accessing the information I sought from them. Yet, the management of ethical issues around access, power, confidentiality, anonymity (Kusi, 2012) and establishing a congenial atmosphere between respondents and myself were factors that I envisaged having the potential to reduce the pre-conceived notions of my identity on the study findings. Regarding the issue of power, Kvale (2009, p. 34) states that 'the point is not that power should necessarily be eliminated from research interviews, but rather that interviews ought to reflect the role of power in the production of interview knowledge'. I was highly conscious of the power relationship in the interview situation, especially where the teachers at the basic level might regard me as a senior educator at the tertiary level, or a parent sees me as an 'intruder' in their lives and those of their children. In such a situation, it seemed that it would be more fruitful to adopt a facilitative role in the focus group conversation as well as the interviews by spending more time listening as opposed to doing most of the talking. During the data collection stage, my focus group participants and interviewees felt less threatened as they freely asked questions relating to my career aspirations, marital status, religious affiliation

and education; this conversation was an indication that they were not threatened. Such a conversation reinforced the initial rapport that I had established with them.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

I conducted the research under the University of Sussex ethical research framework. The Sussex School of Education and Social Work Guidelines on Standards on Research Ethics include the need to safeguard the interests and rights of those involved or affected by the research (See Appendix E). Such ethical considerations are also aimed at reducing risks and enhancing the trustworthiness as well as credibility of the study

4.5 i Negotiating Access to the Research Setting

When planning research, there is the need to confirm that access to the appropriate people, documents, meetings and other data will be possible (Smith, 2005, p.3). It is also unethical to enter into an organisation or social groups to collect data without permission from the 'gate-keepers' (Cresswell, 2005). I therefore went to the Municipal Director of Education in Winneba, the capital of Effutu Municipality for permission to conduct research on two schools to be selected in her jurisdiction. The Municipal Director of Education was very co-operative regarding my presence as an opportunity to engage with someone with the willingness to make an effort to improve the state of education in the municipality, and which could well initiate an intervention aimed at enhancing parental involvement in basic schooling. Accessing potential participants in focus group discussion through the Municipal director of Education had its own implications; could there be a sense of unacknowledged coercion to participate on the part of those individuals approached? Moreover, as the Municipal Director of Education was head of all education institutions in the municipality, potential participants might have felt obliged to extend courtesy to me by association in the same manner that they

would to other senior Ghana Education Service officials. This affects anonymity and confidentiality if Ministry of Education staff and head teachers knew who participants were and so the issue of power becomes complicated here. This process left people potentially identifiable and that I have tried to mitigate this in the way I have written up the data. In addition to assuring participants that all information volunteered by them would be treated as confidential I stressed that no personal names would be included in the subsequent research project. I have also referred to participants by their roles in the research project, for example, teacher focus group member. The Municipal Director of Education then gave me a letter of introduction that I took to two schools we had identified through the selection process. I thus visited the two heads of these schools who were also receptive and welcoming. One of them, school 1 especially, was happy to see me declaring that this was the first time anyone had come to the village school to conduct research, and was very grateful, assuring me of all necessary assistance. I was officially introduced to the teachers, SMC and PTA executives in separate meetings called by the respective heads in the study schools. Access to study participants was therefore negotiated with the MDE and the heads of the two selected schools.

Informed Consent

Informed consent involves giving information about the study – how it will be carried out, the nature of their participation, the time requirement, the kind of data to be collected, and how it will be used and reported (Kusi, 2012). I made sure that participants understood that no one was obliged to take part in the study and, if they did, were free to withdraw at any time – including during a focus group discussion or interview – and that they could also request that data on them be destroyed after the session. All the participants (including those who lacked literacy) fully understood this as they willingly decided to participate in the study.

In the Ghanaian context, most rural parents are unable to read and write (GLSS, 2008) and so asking them to append their signature to a document to give informed consent to participation in an undertaking can become problematic. This meant that the signing of consent forms needed to be navigated with the study context in mind (Kusi, 2012) and participants who could not sign the informed consent document had the option to thumbprint if they wanted to.

Confidentiality and Application of Sensitive Data

One way of protecting the privacy of research participants is through confidentiality. Confidentiality is very crucial especially if the research explores private lives of participants or gathers sensitive information about them (Kusi, 2012). I know that confidentiality cannot apply in the same way to a focus group discussion as people hear what other people say and can repeat if they want to. I assured respondents that all information volunteered by them would be treated as confidential within the context of the study and that no personal names would be included in the subsequent thesis. I was anxious about what might happen as a result of the research at a later date and I tried consciously to mitigate any sensitivities.

Anonymity

Anonymity is another way of protecting participants' 'right to privacy'. A participant or subject is therefore considered anonymous when the researcher or another person cannot identify the participants from the information provided (Cohen et al., 2007). The sample size was relatively small and identifiable so protecting their identity is harder. Using small number in instances where the data were sensitive, comments should not be attributed to a particular school. In reporting and discussing my findings, participants were referred to by their roles in the research project, for example, community focus group participant, teacher focus group participant, parents by 1- 12. Pseudonyms were

also used for the case study schools and the communities they served including the naming of the region and the map to ensure anonymity.

4.6 Data Analysis

I began the process of data analysis after all the audio-recorded discussion and interviews had been fully transcribed. The process involved in data transcription and analysis was as follows:

- Transcription and analysis of focus group – School 1 and 2 combined-groups involved.
- Comparison of focus group 1 and 2 data. Identification of emerging themes.
- Transcription and analysis of all 6 parents interview data at School 1.
- Comparison of all parent interview data at School 1.
- Transcription and analysis of all 6 parents interview data at School 2.
- Comparison of all parent interview data at School 2.
- Comparison of all parent data – both schools.
- Comparison of parent data to focus group 1 and 2. Refining of emerging themes.
- Transcription and analysis of focus group 3-combined Schools 1 and 2 and all stakeholder groups.
- Comparison of focus group 3 data to other focus group data/all other data.
- Refining of emerging themes.

The first step was the identification of codes. Coding has been described as a means of identifying and labelling concepts and phrases in interview transcripts and field notes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Every response of each participant was checked and assigned a code, a process that generated several codes for each interview transcript. The initial codes were listed on separate sheets of paper after which they were compared, sorted and grouped. The groups of codes were then summarised into

general themes for the analysis. In managing the data, several categories/ themes emerged. These included: the role of the extended family and community networks; parental difficulty in sending children to school/need to work; parental difficulty in paying for school; communication with parents; parental literacy as a factor affecting support for learning; use of English language as a factor affecting involvement in school; parental intimidation; practice of corporal punishment; fund-raising; financial management and administration; monitoring of teachers and school; provision and maintenance of school physical resources. These were then grouped into broad themes, such as the impact of socio-economic factors on parental involvement, parental communication, literacy and language and the impact of relationships and discipline on parental involvement, the School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

The above themes reflected the relationship between the research questions and the process of analysis. I critically read the transcripts several times, highlighting statements relevant to the issues under study in order to identify themes and sub-themes. For example, the fora and forms of parental involvement, barriers and facilitators of parental involvement were drawn out of the following excerpts of initial coding shown in appendix D. Themes that emerged from the data constituted the basis for analysis and quotations from respondents were used to support the themes.

Data analysis were both literal (i.e., involving the analysis of raw data alone), interpretative (i.e., I ascribed a meaning to the data myself), and reflexive (i.e., I engaged with the data by bringing my extraneous experiences into the interpretive process (Mason, 1996). During the write-up of the thesis I considered it necessary to do minor editing of some of the portions of the transcripts to facilitate clarity in reading. I also translated the community focus group discussions that were done in Fante. This was also to make the quotations readable and accessible to readers.

Chapter 5: Factors affecting Parental Involvement in Basic Education in Rural Ghana

5.0 Introduction to Chapter 5

In this chapter, I address the first research question: What are the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in the case study schools? It is necessary to understand these barriers and facilitators before looking at how they affect the interactions occurring within and between key fora. A major objective of this study was to explore the key constraints or challenges to parental involvement in Basic schools in rural Ghana, particularly in respect of less advantaged parents. Accordingly, in this first data chapter, four issues are discussed. It begins with a discussion of the role of the extended family in providing support for schooling and how this links to socio-economic factors and patterns of parental and seasonal migration. It then considers the relationship between socio-economic factors and the costs associated with schooling as a factor limiting parental involvement. It then considers the impact of parental communication, literacy and language on parental involvement. It concludes with the impact of relationships and discipline on parental involvement.

5.1 Socio-economic factors and the role of the Extended Family

In this section, I discuss the extended family and the part played by grandmothers in the survival or economics and schooling of the households. I also look at how the practice of privileging of boys' education limits mothers' and grandmothers' capacity to be fully involved in the schooling of the child. As discussed in the literature review, in Ghana, the dynamics of the extended family system make the definition of 'parent' rather fluid as it is common for children to live with relatives who are not biological parents but who assume responsibility for the upkeep of the child including their schooling. In the case of rural Ghana, the definition of 'parent' is also linked with the

impact of migration as many parents are seasonal migrants who leave their children in the care of relatives to enable them to provide for family sustenance (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999; Case, Paxson and Abledinger, 2004; Powell et al., 2004). Consistent with this, the responses gathered from parent interviews suggested that adult family members specifically grandmothers played a vital role either as on-going caretakers of pupils or momentarily when demands of parents took them away from home.

When parents were asked why their own parents took over the care of their wards school attendance, homework and other school activities at certain times of the year, the responses were varied and diverse. One single father noted:

During some seasons, I migrate... to do fishing. Sometimes I live there for eight months before coming back home; it all depends on how long the fishing season in that place lasts. In my absence, my mother takes care of the children [Parent 5, School 1]

This suggests that the economic activities of the people are predominantly fishing and that due to the nature of this economic activity, migration is common place. It also suggests that grandmothers were in charge of the upkeep of children when the biological parents were away from home. One aunt also indicated the importance of the extended family in the survival of the households:

My trading business takes me around the country to such major markets... The duration of each trip, depends on how long it takes to sell my farm produce. In my absence, my mother takes care of the child [Parent 6, School 2]

The above quote also underscores the importance of the extended family system and how this links to particular values. A child belongs to the extended family, not his/her biological parent so everyone does what they can to help in the child's upbringing (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999; GSS, 2000). Another mother noted:

My brother, if living conditions here were good, why would I travel out for long periods? If the children themselves are to be fed well or remain in school, I have no choice than to relocate from time to time plying my trade. Fortunately, my old lady is quite healthy and strong so she takes care of the children while I am away [Parent 2, School 1]

The above quote suggests that parents, mothers in particular, migrate in pursuit of trading activities to provide for family sustenance and according to them, they do so due to poor living conditions in rural areas, leaving behind grandmothers to care for their children. Thus, when the exigencies of survival compel parents to leave home either on short or long trips, grandmothers take over the responsibility of caring for the children. In both school communities, it was not uncommon to find adult members of the extended family step in to provide assistance whenever, for one reason or another biological parents were unable to perform one or other chores.

Interviews, nevertheless, suggested that parents were keenly aware of the limitations of grandparents in spite of their willingness to assist with childcare. Physical frailties associated with aging as well as the low literacy levels ensuing from the centuries-old preference for boy-child education, mean that grandmothers, in particular, are sometimes handicapped, in carrying out these chores. As one parent, a father commented:

I'm aware that my mother is old and unlettered but if I don't relocate to do fishing the survival of the entire family will be seriously jeopardized. I would have wished to do fishing permanently here in this community, but the reality is that the fishing work entails seasonal migration and my great-great grandparents migrated from time to time [Parent 5, School 1]

Another parent, a mother had this to say:

My only concern has to do with my mother looking after the children when I'm away for some months to trade in major markets in the country to enable me provide for the family sustenance [Parent 1, School 2]

The above quotes suggest that parents migrate mainly in pursuit of trading or income-generating activities for the benefit of all members of the extended family. Thus, as and when necessary, grandparents standing in assist in the care of their grand children is all part of the daily struggle for the survival of all in the extended family.

Teachers' Perspectives on Migration

In this section, I cover teachers' perspectives on migration. Interviews with head teachers confirmed that the practice of parents migrating to do fishing or attend market centres elsewhere leaving grandparents to cater for children was very common in the study communities. One head teacher noted:

In this community, seasonal migration is very high. When parents are away, grandparents are frequently requested to attend PTA meetings and other school events. When you ask children, they tell you their parents were out of town doing business or job [Teacher Interview, School 2].

In emphasising the severity of seasonal migration in the community, another head teacher remarked that:

Most of these grandparents who attend PTA or other school events are invalids, illiterate and often found dozing at meetings. Sometimes, we become frustrated when grandparents provide answers or contributions ordinarily not expected of a parent. But we understand the situation; they are standing in for their children. Otherwise, their grand-children would suffer the consequences [Teacher Interview, School 1]

The above quote seems to imply that parents are obliged to attend PTA or other school events. The evidence suggests that so long as a pupil is represented, the child is

absolved from sanctions. In the rural contexts such as this one, once a parent attends PTA or other school events, the child is free from sanctions. However, once in a while, teachers became frustrated when grandparents were unable to provide answers or some other contributions ordinarily expected from a parent. Notwithstanding the above challenges, one educated grandfather was praised for his involvement in PTA and school events. As one teacher puts it:

There is one grandparent who is fairly regular at PTA and other school events. Occasionally, he visits the school to find out how the grandson is performing. He also contributes meaningfully at meetings. I have no doubt that he went high up the educational ladder before retiring from active work. I really admire him [Teacher Interview, School 2].

This quote shows appreciation of the involvement of those who are more educated. It is clear that in rural contexts such as this one grandparent, but grandmothers in particular, play a vital role in children's education but the 'quality' of parental representation or involvement in school is dependent on the capacity of the person attending the meeting, whether parent or grandparent. As indicated in the literature review, in most deprived communities in Africa, decades-old customary practices are such that parents prefer boys' education to that of girls'. Consequently, whenever family resources do not permit educating both children then boys are enrolled at the expense of their sisters (Obeng, 2002; Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). The data collected for this study highlights some of the issues raised about competency might be explained by this practice which limits grandmothers' capacity to be fully involved in the child's education. Parental preference for boys over girls was encountered on several instances in the current study. For example, one parent, a father, recounted:

Until recently, I had three children, two girls and a boy in a school. Owing to limited resources, I asked the two girls to stop schooling and work to be able to raise money to continue the education of the boy. At the moment, one girl sells foodstuffs at the market while the other sells firewood. If all three had remained in school, things would have been very difficult for all of us [Parent 3, School 2]

Another parent, a father commented:

The girls would be married off, hopefully to men who had already made it in life, hence there was no need to worry about classroom education for them. I know a number of girls in our community who have had their education disrupted because of early marriage and some in the course of their schooling as result of pregnancy. In the light of this, I have decided to channel all my resources into ensuring that my only boy completes school and become a big man in society. After all, how many women occupy top positions in our society? [Parent 11, School 1].

The inevitable conclusion is that parental choices are circumscribed by available resources and this has wider implications, namely that as the girl child is considered less important, they grow up into mothers who are less equipped to be actively involved in school activities. Another parent in support of the above had this to say:

Our girls are the luckiest school children as their financial burden will be borne by their husbands in future. We expect the boys to work hard in their education to be able to raise monies to support us in future [Parent 6, School 2]

The above quotes indicate that parental involvement depends on which child will most likely look after a parent. The quotes suggest parents' belief that an educated son will be able to provide for his family, but an educated daughter will become a mother, and wife anyway, regardless of her schooling. It also suggests that the boy needs classroom education in order to get a good job to support his future wife. Such sentiment is certainly not new, what is worrying is the persistence of such practices in

the 21st century. Invariably, men grow up having a sense of entitlement and superiority, while women may lack self-esteem or believe that they cannot accomplish much. This kind of cultural mind-set might also influence parental decisions to enrol a child in school.

An interview with a class teacher about her views on girls' performance as compared to boys showed that teachers generally did not perceive any differences between the abilities of the sexes. However, the head teacher attributed the preference for boys' education to inherent cultural biases:

Though I do not perceive any differences between boys and girls in terms of academic performance in general, in this rural community, the belief is that girls' education no matter the level ends her in the kitchen [Teacher Interview, School 2].

This finding corroborates that of Yeboah (1997) that cultural bias and the perception of which child will most likely look after parent were critical variables in family decisions around girls' education. However, there were some progressive parents who were advocating for an equal treatment for both boys and girls. One parent, a father, had this to say:

Parents should invest in the education of both sexes since they could pool resources upon successful education to look after parents in their old age [Parent 3, School 2].

In all, it appears that parental involvement in children's education, indeed, the decision as to whether to send the child to school or not and to withdraw the child or not when the going gets tough, is often determined by cultural norms. Disadvantaged in society, girls' education can be sacrificed while family resources are invested in the boy-child's education. Eventually, parental fears are fulfilled as the girl-child is impregnated and is

sent to the city to work as a house-help –and to begin an unending, abiding cycle as one parent commented:

In this community, most girls have dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancy. Most of them drop-out and end up selling fish, foodstuffs or some other ware. A large percentage of them move on into the city where the lucky ones find job as house help while the rest have to contend with life in the streets [Parent 9, School 1].

It seems archaic traditions and long-held societal misconceptions about girl-child education in rural Ghana turn self-fulfilling prophecy as the girl-child, eventually, drops out of school as a result of pregnancy, marriage, poverty or a combination of any of these. The extent of parental involvement in basic education in rural Ghana, is thus, informed by the biological sex of the child. This persistent practice of preference for boy child education ultimately limits the capacity of grandmothers to be fully involved in the education of their grandchildren.

5.2 The Impact of Socio-economic factors and the costs of schooling on Parental Involvement

The parental decision to send a child to school or not is the first point on a continuum of parental involvement and socio-economic factors are the key factor shaping these decisions. The cost of schooling and gender preferences contribute to these decisions. In this section, I cover two issues namely: difficulty in sending children to school /need to work and difficulty in paying for school.

5.2 i Parental difficulty in sending children to school / need to work

As discussed in the literature review, parental involvement at the very basic level in Ghana involves parents' decisions to send children to school or not (Canagarajah and Coulombe 1997; MOESS, 2006; Oduro, 2000; Pryor, 2005). The difficulties involved in

sending children to school are exacerbated in the case of lone parent households. In spite of parents' precarious economic conditions, some were found to invest in their children's education on moral obligation. As found in the literature, in rural communities in Ghana, because subsistence agriculture is prevalent, the opportunity cost of schooling to households is palpably high, the incomes from children's labour in agriculture or other home productive activities are lost to the family as they attend school (Bray, 1996; Blunch and Verner, 2000). Ghana's Labour Decree (1967) prohibits employment of children under the age of 15, although it permits undefined 'light' work by children. Where the nature of the work permits it, child labour provides financial support for the child's schooling and that of siblings (Canagarajah and Coloumbe, 1997; Akyeampong et al., 2007).

In the current study, parents interviewed intimated that children from poor families often worked during school hours to augment the household income. For example, one parent, a mother had this to say:

In times of bumper fish catch, my children abandon school to sell fish to support the family's income because of our abject poverty. Sometimes, they do this on their own, at other times I ask them to suspend schooling, especially when they need to assist me on my farms during the planting and harvesting seasons [Parent 12, School 1]

Another mother added that:

Sometimes I have to ask my children to stay away from school and sell foodstuffs to raise income to support their educational needs [Parent 9, School 1].

The above two quotes suggest that poverty compels children in the fishing and marketing centres to work while schooling sometimes at the request of mothers to support educational needs.

During interviews, teachers from both study schools noted that children's school attendance was directly correlated to their parents' socio-economic standing; the wealthier the parents, the higher the prospects of children attending school and vice-versa. In the current study, teachers remarked that the poor fish landings being experienced lately had impacted negatively on parents' ability to facilitate their children's schooling.

These days fishing business in this community is not fetching parents the needed incomes at all because they spend much on fuel but earn very little from the business. Due to this, they (parents) are unable to cater for their children's attendance in school [Teacher Interview, School 1]

The quote above suggests that economic livelihood activities dictate how parents are to support their children's education. This implies that poor socio-economic standing of parents negatively affects involvement in their children's school.

The study found that single parenthood was a key economic constraint to parental involvement. Lone parents appeared more unlikely to provide education materials or otherwise facilitate their children's schooling as they faced economic challenges that made it difficult to meet the educational needs of their children. For example, one parent remarked:

I'm a single mother without formal education. After the death of my husband, I single-handedly catered for the educational needs of my two children. I wake up early and go to the beach to carry fish for a fee. Sometimes, the children are late to school or do not attend, in short

attending school depends on our financial conditions [Parent 9, School 1].

Another parent, added:

My parents failed to send me to school and this has affected my support to the children's education. Unfortunately I do not have a husband to support. As a result, I single-handedly pay the children's school fees. Unfortunately, I earn very little income from the sale of iced-water business [Parent 7, School 2]

The argument that the investment in girls is of lesser importance adversely affects single mothers in particular as clearly these women are not being financially supported by men. This also suggests that, confronted with diminished incomes, mothers had to constantly strike a balance between feeding the family and providing the children with formal education. As one parent narrated:

Because I struggle alone without support from a husband, I'm unable to attend school events and meetings. My children sometimes go to the market to sell iced-water to complement the family income [Parent 7, School 2].

Interviews with teachers also confirmed how lone parents in dire straits struggled to get involved in their children's education. For example, one teacher had this to say during an interview:

Most lone parents face serious financial problems and cannot get involved in their children's school the extent they would have wished to. As a result both mother and child, even school-going children, utilise the least opportunity they get on engaging in income-generating ventures [Teacher Interview, School 1].

It also emerged that lone parents found it difficult merely maintaining contacts with the school:

I had to struggle very hard gathering firewood for sale before the children could make it through school. I hardly attended school events and meetings. I hardly visited the school to find out about my children's academic progress all because I needed to ensure they remained in school.
[Parent 9, School 1]

It can be inferred from all the above quotes that lone parents struggled to maintain contact with the school not because they did not appreciate the value in such contacts but because they felt they needed to ensure that the children ought, first and foremost, be catered for!

As indicated in the literature review, in spite of parents especially single mothers' precarious economic conditions, some parents in rural Ghana send children to school out of moral obligation (Dei, 2004; Donkor, 2010). In the current study, it emerged during parent interviews that some parents viewed their children's education as a moral duty.

I'm a Christian and the Bible tells me that children are special gifts from God and should not be toyed with, otherwise on the judgement day God will ask me what I did with my children's education. This is why in spite of my own financial difficulties; I'm squeezing water out of stone to assist their education [Parent 1, School 2].

The above quote suggests that parents' belief in God and about children as important assets as spelt out in the bible regardless of their financial challenges do not prevent them from active engagement in their children's education (Dei, 2004; Donkor, 2010).

Another parent noted that:

In the scriptures, we learn that all those who were faithful to God and took good care of their children were abundantly blessed with more resources. Those who did not heed God's word were punished. I have accordingly resolved to educate my children to the best of my ability. I do for God who gave them to me, in the first place!
[Parent 4, School 2]

The above quote indicates that fear of God's punishment and expectations of blessings in the form of more resources encouraged parental involvement, an indication of the importance of parental beliefs and practices as interests in children's education.

In the teacher interviews, teachers asserted that they warned parents who were indifferent to the education of their children that God's wrath would be upon them. For example, one teacher commented that:

Even though, the school is a non-Christian denomination, most parents are Christians and they heed our admonitions to provide formal education for their children. So in spite of everything they struggle to finance the children's education. I guess they do so in obedience to God [Teacher Interview, School 2].

Another teacher noted that:

We do our best to advise pupils at morning devotions and parents at school meetings about the need for formal education. Thank heavens our 'preaching' is making an impact! [Teacher Interview, School 1].

It can be inferred from the above quotes that teachers use the fear of God to encourage parents to educate their children. Some parents see the responsibility for educating their children as a moral obligation with the claim that they sent their children to school because they (the children) were God's gift to them.

5.2 ii Parental difficulty in paying for school

In Ghana, there is supposed to be free education through the capitation grant at the basic level but there are still costs incurred by parents which make it difficult for their active engagement in their children's education (Akyeampong et al., 2007; Yoshioka, 2010). As discussed in the literature review, schooling costs emerged as very critical factors in the decision to enrol a child at school. In rural Ghana, research has shown

that financial costs weighted heavily in the decision-making process by parents (Bray, 1996; Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1997; Avotri, 2000; Oduro, 2000; Akyeampong et al., 2007). During one parent interview in the current study, one parent, a mother openly lauded the state's fee-free policy for making schooling more accessible. In her own words:

These days, parents do not pay tuition fees because of capitation grant. Unfortunately, however, there are other hidden costs like payment of children's school uniforms, sandals, exercise books etc. We poor parents here depend on fishing for our survival but these days, the business has gone down drastically. In fact these days we can hardly afford three square meals a day. So making any form of payment to see the children through schooling is a real burden. We need to be frank with you [Parent 2, School 1].

Another parent, a mother also noted:

In-spite of capitation grants, I pay for schooling costs such as exercise books, uniforms, pencils and pens. For a long time I survived on proceeds made from the sale of firewood. But following the ban on unauthorised felling of trees, life has become unbearable, making it impossible for me to bear these costs [Parent1, School 2].

In other words, the introduction of the capitation grant was not in itself sufficient to remove all the parents' financial concerns, what they considered 'hidden' costs still constitute barriers to parental involvement, especially in rural communities. Although basic school is officially free for every child, in practice, parents claimed providing such items as uniforms, sandals, food and exercise books took a huge toll on the meagre family budget. As one parent, a mother admitted:

I lack the necessary funds to send my children to school and to pay additional costs such as uniform, exercise books and stationery. Because of this; the majority of my children are currently engaged actively in my fishing business[Parent 2, School 1].

This quote suggests children are working to pay the schooling costs too as parents appeared to be limited in their financial ability to assist. Another parent remarked that:

Because of the high cost of such items like stationery, school uniform and PTA dues, I work with my children on market days. After all, these children are able to raise substantial incomes on market days to support schooling cost [Parent 7, School 2].

This implies that there are some parents for whom sending a child to school is a difficult choice because of the consequences of this on their own economic survival. Thus, while the capitation grant is viewed as a relief, it does not absolve parents entirely of financial responsibilities in respect of children's schooling. They are, consequently compelled into weighing the benefits against the costs before deciding on the child's enrolment. Children have to work too to support family survival.

The education system in Ghana requires that children have uniforms, books, pens, and other stationery supplies. As already discussed, the state's funding of 'free education' was seen not to cater for a large number of essential learning aid. Asked what happens when children attend school without these, one parent, a mother responded:

On several occasions, my own son has been sent home for lacking one or the other item. In the process, he misses classes and this shows in his overall performance. It's really worrying, even shameful, but what can one do? [Parent 1, School 2]

Tattered uniform or mufti is a major consequence of parental poverty and discomfort to the pupil. So, despite the GES policy restraining school authorities from sending pupils home on account of their education, it gets to a point when pupils are asked to stay home to avoid embarrassment because in extreme cases, such children suffer teasing from their colleagues.

There was a time last year when my child insisted on getting a new school uniform before going to school. He claimed he couldn't bear the embarrassment of being sent home by the teacher. Because I couldn't afford a new uniform I had to acquiesce. [Parent 2, School 1]

In the above quote, it is obvious that despite the parents' own discomfiture, the resources to salvage the situation are just not available. In these two scenarios, parents' dire economic circumstances made it difficult to be actively involved in their children's education as the cost of acquiring new school uniform for children was found to be unbearable. This finding supports the claim of Avotri (2000) in his study in Ghana that actual costs of schooling are the main factors affecting parental involvement in the child's schooling especially in rural areas.

The foregoing scenario indicates that there are costs besides tuition fees and that despite the capitation grant, parents will have to meet some financial obligations in respect of their children's basic education. The concerns of the head teachers relate to other kinds of things, which would not be seen as parental responsibilities but as essential in other contexts. For example, head teachers indicated that in the capitation grant to schools, no provision was made for printing of test papers for mock examination of final year students. According to the head teachers, this is a burden for them as in most cases they do not have any option other than to pass that on to parents. One head teacher remarked:

We do not take delight in imposing levies on parents. Fact is, certain items are not covered by the capitation grant; for example the cost of printing examination papers. So in spite of protestations by the GES, we are forced to charge parents for such items [Teacher Interview, School 1]

It would appear that the capitation grant is not sufficient in absorbing the costs to parents in enrolling their children in basic schools including some costs supposed to

have been covered by the government. These schooling costs may be disincentive to parental involvement in children's education in rural communities.

5.3 The Impact of Communication on Parental Involvement

As discussed in the literature review, a school has the potential to either facilitate or inhibit a fruitful relationship between parents and teachers (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Christenson, 2004). The climate created by the school – the extent to which it actively and fully welcomes and invites parents is a factor that influences parental involvement in school (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Torre and Murphy, 2016). However, a communication gap between the school and its community will invariably create a barrier to parental involvement (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Adam, 2005; Gyan, 2007; Dampson and Mensah, 2010). In this section, I begin by discussing how the schools used positive communication to build relationships and I then discuss barriers to communication.

a) Communication to build Relationships

Parent interviews revealed that parents at both schools were encouraged to communicate any concerns they had about their children to the school authorities. Teachers and school administrators stressed the need to maintain good communication channels with parents. For example, one parent, a father confirmed:

In our meetings with school heads and teachers, they tell us not to hesitate to communicate any concerns we have about our children. I have taken advantage of this to contact my boy's class teacher about his academic performance. One thing I like about the school is its emphasis on good communication with parents [Parent 3, School 2].

The above quote suggests that parental communication with school enabled them to ascertain academic performance of children from their class teachers. School authorities also appear to be encouraging parents to interact with the school. Teacher encouragement to parents has the potential of increasing their involvement in school activities. In the current study, it was found that majority of the sample parents in School 2 were satisfied with the manner in which the school authorities communicated with them. As one parent pointed out:

I appreciate the school's efforts in communicating with us; I receive notices for meetings on time; I only hope and pray that the diligence with which they relate with us is also demonstrated in their core work so that in the end it will reflect in the performance of our children in public exams [Parent 6, School 2].

Parents hoped that improved channels of communication would eventually reflect positive in the performance of their children in the classroom. Another parent, a father, suggested that regular communication between parties also fosters positive community-school relations and parental involvement in school programmes and activities:

Regular communication emanating from the school authorities means that I am always abreast with developments in the school; In turn I also regularly attend school programmes and activities [Parent 3, School 2].

This implies a reciprocal relationship in community-school relations and parental involvement in school activities. Parent interviews in School 2 also indicated that teachers duly notified parents about impending social events and invited them to attend. For example, one parent, a father, noted that:

Anytime there was a school event such as athletics, football matches, or cultural festivals, teachers notified us with letters through our children in school and I make sure I attend [Parent 3, School 2].

This quote implies that school communication with parents about impending events/programmes yielded positive response in terms of participation.

b) Barriers to Communication

In School 1 community even though invitations to such events were sent through pupils, some parents failed to turn up for various reasons. For example, one parent, a mother with no formal education, had this to say:

We have raised this issue of sending us invitation letters through our children to be stopped but the head teachers do not seem to agree with us. We have told them to invite us to the school to collect the notices ourselves as opposed to giving to the children, who in most cases, either forget or lose them [Parent 9, School 1].

Some children fail to deliver invitation letters to their parents, claiming that their parents did not understand enough about their education to be able to help them:

My ward in school says he does not bother giving me the invitation because it is of little value to me [Parent 12, School 1].

In other words, some pupils being aware of the literacy status of their parents exacerbates matters by not delivering written invitations to their parents.

In an attempt to mitigate the problem of limited communication between school and parent, the authorities of School 1 had introduced a medium of communication using a public address system operated by the Village Development Unit Committee (VDUC). However, this did not work satisfactorily with some parents either. This new medium of communication is now in vogue in most rural communities in Ghana but is yet to make an impact on the educational front because when it was first introduced about a decade ago, the adverts carried ranged from herbal concoctions and religious sermons to news

of lost items and communal labour. (The last named was the initial motive for introducing the medium) and educational institutions are apparently struggling to find a niche in the large barrage of announcements. One parent commented as follows:

I do not understand why head teachers think by using public address system, every parent will hear them. Most of us travel long distances to other big markets in the country to do business, and do not return to the village in time. Because we are away most of the time, we do not hear the notices sent through the public address system [Parent 9, School 1].

In addition to the large diversity of announcements in the public address system, in School 1 community, the trading activities took parents to distances out of reach of the new medium of communication.

5.4 The Impact of Literacy and Language on Parental Involvement

In this section, I examine the impact of literacy and language on parental involvement. I begin with parental literacy as a factor affecting support for learning at home. Next, I cover the use of English language as a factor affecting parental involvement in school activities.

5.4 i Parental Literacy as a factor affecting Support for learning at Home

Parents with low literacy level might have the will to assist children with their learning but are constrained by their own limited formal education (Adam, 2005; Donkor, 2010). Parents interviewed in the two case study schools were mostly of the view that the reason for sending their children to school was to enable them to receive the best education. Many of them believed that teachers were the ones who had been professionally trained to provide the children with classroom education. As one parent, a mother stressed:

I'm a trader who has not received classroom education. But, I want my children to receive formal education, having seen the benefits associated with schooling in my community. If my child brings an assignment home, how do I assist him or her since I do not know a, b, c...? What I can do is ask someone well versed in the subject-area to assist [Parent7, School 2].

The above quote suggests that mothers, though interested in their children receiving formal education due to the perceived benefits are less likely to assist in home work due to their low literacy and limited formal education. Another parent, a mother, supported this assertion, thus:

I've been a trader all my life; engaged in buying and selling firewood. I attended school up to class one and stopped since my parents were no longer able to afford my education. It would be extremely difficult for me to assist my child in his or her homework since I'm not formally educated. In most cases, I fall on an educated cousin to assist [Parent 9, School 1].

This quote also suggests that parents with low literacy level and limited formal education were less likely to assist in their children's homework. The GES policy on homework stipulates that as much as possible, parents should assist children in their homework by way of supervision and monitoring (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001).

The majority of parents who expressed concerns about their inability to help with their children's homework said they tended to rely on family members (siblings, cousins, etc.) for support with homework:

I wish I could help with my children's homework but I do not have formal education, I cannot speak English language neither can I write and so I ask my younger brothers who have completed schooling to assist [Parent 2, School 1].

Another parent shared similar sentiments, thus:

Teachers forget that most of us in the rural communities are not educated yet they expect us to assist in our children's homework. It is just impossible; so I rely on others to help [Parent 7, School 2].

Thus, when parents are eager to see their wards through formal education, their own illiterate status can be overcome. As indicated earlier, the literature in developed contexts emphasises support for learning in the home (Holloway et al., 2008; Tao et al., 2008), however, parents in this study were found to be handicapped in the provision of home support for children due to their low literacy level. This therefore challenges the assumption that everyone has the skills – which clearly show they do not – but also shows the importance of extending the idea of parents to the wider family who support home learning (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999)

Teachers noted that absence of clear-cut policy on take-home assignment made it difficult for them as well as parents to know exactly how to go about such exercises.

For example, one teacher noted:

Though the lack of a clear-cut policy on homework is a bother, we give students take-home assignments, and expect parents to sign or thumbprint [Teachers Interview, School 2].

It is clear from the evidence available that even parents sign or thumbprint homework, they may not necessarily be the ones that actually offered assistance in assignments.

One head teacher explained that:

Even though we (teachers) are aware of the willingness of some parents to assist with their children's school work but for limited formal education, we expect them to rely on educated ones for help. We sometimes cane children who fail to do their homework to encourage them do so [Teachers Interview, School 1].

This seems to reinforce the idea of community acting together to assist in children's school work. However, the issue of children being caned for their inability to do homework seems to be problematic as it also seems unjust if parents are not equipped to help.

5.4 ii Use of English Language as a factor affecting Involvement in School Activities

Although parents are not obliged to communicate in English at most official fora, that is the preferred medium. As a result many who are unable to read, speak or write in English are compelled to be mere spectators at most official gatherings (Adam, 2005; Donkor, 2010).. A similar situation pertains in the Parliament of Ghana where some representatives are described as 'mute MPS' because they hardly contribute to debates on the floor of Parliament. This is in spite of the fact that the Country's 1992 Constitution does not insist on English as the sole medium of communication. In Ghana, teachers working in rural areas may be migrants and may not share the language of the parents. This accounts for the insistence on the use of English only but often this serves as a disincentive to parents to attend school events (Mankoe, 2002). This was confirmed in the current study:

I have refused to visit my child's school because the moment you get there you would be greeted with English language. It is good for our children to be encouraged to speak English but I think at our age, we should be spared [Parent 2, School 1].

Where command over the English language as a medium of communication, was lacking a parent did not feel comfortable sharing in discussions at a meeting:

Our PTA meetings are dominated by a few literate parents because they have a good command over the English language; for the most part, the illiterate members have no choice than to remain observers [Parent 2, School 1].

This suggests that only the few literate parents took centre stage in deliberations and discussions at PTA meetings as they appeared more fluent in English language.

Even though GES directives on the conduct of PTA/SMC meetings (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001) recommend the use of local language, evidence from the study schools showed that this was not the practice. One parent questioned:

What prevents the PTA executives from insisting on the use of our own local language in meetings since the majority of us feel more comfortable with that as a medium of expression? I think that the Ghana Education Service has to come out clearly on this matter otherwise; most of us will stop attending PTA [Parent7, School 2].

The use of English, which is against the national directives, was clearly a real barrier to parental involvement in school activities as a mother said it denies or excludes them from involvement in PTA meetings.

Teachers suggested that parental difficulty with communication in English language discourages active involvement in PTA and other school events. However, one teacher explained that:

We have advised parents to feel free to come to school anytime they want but because of their handicap, I mean in speaking English language, do not come at all. Some of us [...] can speak the local language and so I don't understand why that is a big deal to parents [Teacher Interview, School 1].

The implication is that some teachers were aware that communicating in English was a challenge to some parents and were prepared to make a compromise by welcoming even those who could communicate in the local dialect. The problem is that, in the two study communities, there are natives who are not eloquent in either English or Fante. It is that category of parents that has a difficulty interacting with some of the teachers.

5.5 The Impact of Discipline on Relationships and Parental Involvement

As discussed in the literature review, relationships are very important part of the idea of interconnectedness and overlapping spheres of influence between school, family and community and they play out in/across fora both formal and informal (Christenson, 2004; Mbokodi and Singh, 2004; Afful-Broni, 2005; Gyan, 2007). In this section, the influence of school discipline on relationships and parental involvement in the study communities is examined, with emphasis on the intimidation of parents and the negative effects of the meting out of corporal punishment to pupils.

5.5i Parental Intimidation as a factor limiting Involvement in School Activities

To a very large extent, the posture of school authorities makes or mars parental involvement in school affairs; this is especially true in a rural setting where the majority of residents are impoverished and susceptible to the whims of officialdom (Afful-Broni, 2005; Gyan, 2007). Parental intimidation negatively affects relationships and discourages involvement (Dei, 2004; Adam, 2005). In the following section, I examine the extent to which parental involvement is affected by the intimidation or threatening stance of school authorities.

Parents' responses about the manner in which teachers related with them were varied.

For example, one parent, a mother complained that:

A teacher threatened me for remarking that in recent times teachers do not teach but instead send pupils to work on their farms during school hours [Parent 8, School 1].

The posture of teachers painted in the above quote is most unhealthy and likely to demoralize parents and discourage them from meaningful involvement. Another parent, a father, remarked that:

A teacher once verbally abused me for suggesting that he does not teach but merely asks pupils to copy notes from the chalkboard. It was really terrible because my observation was true [Parent3, School 2].

Even though GES policy frowns on verbal abuse (GES, 2001), both quotes show it is hard for parents to raise concerns. Reacting to such unsavoury situations, one parent, a mother intimated that:

I will not spare any teacher who insults me and my child in school. I will not report him or her to any authority; I will handle the situation in any way I deem fit. I am not against disciplinary measures against my ward, but that should not include insulting me as a parent [Parent 9, School 1]

This quote also suggests the use of vulgar language does not promote cordial relationships between parents and teachers. Besides the questions about a teacher's professionalism, such abuse is likely to mar school-community relations and result in confrontation between parents and teachers which might negatively affect involvement.

It emerged during the interview that some parents had withdrawn their wards from the school as a result of intimidation by staff. One parent noted that:

I've withdrawn all my two children from the school and they are currently in another school. At a point, I just could not stand the verbal attacks on me and my sons [Parent 5, School 1].

As in the first example, the quote above appears to suggest that the verbal attacks were persistent rather than a one-off. However, when head teacher respondents were asked to comment on intimidation of parents, one head teacher noted that:

I'm not aware of any intimidation of parents by my staff members; I am told that used to be the case some time past. As we speak, no case of assault, verbal or physical has been reported against any staff member [Teacher Interview, School 2]

Another head teacher responded:

I will not sit down for any teacher to intimidate a parent as GES policy frowns on it. Any teacher caught up in that practice will be drastically dealt with [Teacher Interview, School 2].

Head teachers suggested that verbal abuse from teachers was not uncommon in the communities. Besides its negative consequences for parental involvement in education, the unfortunate practice may lead to open hostilities between teachers on one side and parents and children on the other and there are good relations too.

5.5 ii Corporal Punishment and Parental Involvement

Another aspect of teachers' practices that has the potential to undermine parental involvement is corporal punishment. In this section, I move from threatening/insulting parents to a discussion of corporal punishment. Although several countries – including New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and some states in the United States – have recognised the deleterious effects of corporal punishment and have thus abolished it, Ghana is one of those countries that still hold on to the practice. In the late 1970s, the GES partially banned corporal punishment in schools by restricting its administration to head teachers or their deputies. By then it had been realised that the majority of teachers were abusing corporal punishment and injuring pupils as a result (Boakye, 2001). The practice persists in Ghana on the spurious belief that it facilitates

learning (Boakye, 2001). As at July 2005, the Ghana Education Service and the Teachers' Handbook issued by the Ministry of Education concede that there were no mechanism in place for monitoring corporal punishment in schools. Consequently, in 2006, attempts were made to prohibit the practice but the proposed legislation is yet to see the light of day.

In the current study, some parents on the SMC expressed their disapproval of the manner in which some teachers disciplined their errant children. Specifically, most of them were disgusted about the meting out of corporal punishment. One parent, a mother, vividly recounted that:

Though we learn that caning has been prohibited, in this village, the practice goes on unabated. The day my son reports of any corporal punishment meted out to him, that teacher will wear the same trousers with me! [Parent 7, School 2].

Another parent, also a mother narrated that:

My boy had to be rushed home after being severely caned by his teacher. On my return from work, I sent the boy to the hospital for medical treatment. I later went to the school to find out what warranted such abuse. Surprisingly, the class teacher rained insults on me, claiming that these days parents do not want their children to be disciplined [Parent 2, School 1].

The above two quotes show that where corporal punishment is excessive, parents get distraught. This seems likely to engender disaffection between schools and communities with negative consequences for parental involvement in school activities.

When I asked teachers and head teachers about their attitudes towards corporal punishment, nearly all of them upheld the practice, though a few condemned it as inhumane. One of the opponents argued that:

It is unfortunate that some of my colleague teachers still use the cane; I have always been against it. If I witness I will report that teacher to the Municipal Director of Education, I will by-pass the head because such cases tend to have the blessing of the head [Teacher Interview, School 2].

This suggests that teachers use caning as a means of instilling discipline in children in the belief –rightly or wrongly– that they have a responsibility to do so as long as the children are in school. However, other teachers complained that because some parents did not take kindly to corporal punishment, they have shied away from the practice. One proponent of corporal punishment remarked that:

It would be disastrous to stop using the cane because it instils discipline into pupils. Parents should therefore leave discipline of their children in school for us since they stand the chance of benefiting in future when their children make it in life [Teacher Interview, School 1].

The head teacher of the school in question, who appeared to be unaware of the practice in the school, asserted that the practice had been abolished by the GES long ago. It was permitted in exceptional cases where the head alone was permitted to exercise that discretion. The head teacher noted that:

No case regarding corporal punishment has come to my notice or attention. The practice of corporal punishment has been abolished by the GES. In extreme cases, we (heads of school) are allowed to use canes on those found flouting the rules [Teacher Interview, School 2]

It is clear that, at least in the study schools, corporal punishment persists to the dismay of parents as well as some teachers.

The issue of corporal punishment has for long divided the Ghanaian society as a whole (Boakye, 2001). There are those who endorse on the basis of the biblical injunction of ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child’ (Proverbs 13:24). For adherents to this philosophy,

modern society is wayward because of the neglect of this injunction. But here are also those who are vehemently opposed to it on the ground that it is barbaric, inhuman and liable to abuse by teachers. The official policy is a compromise one: teachers can administer corporal punishment only with the permission of the head. But this is sometimes abused as teachers sometimes use their own discretion in these matters apparently without any sanctions by the head teachers. In the current study, the dichotomy in opinions prevailing at the national level is to be maintained in both schools.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The findings in this chapter have addressed Research Question 1: What are the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in the case study schools? The study found that extended family networks play a significant role in parental involvement in school activities in part because of socio-economic factors and patterns of parental and seasonal migration. In particular, grandparents and other adult members facilitated the rapport between school and parents, when the latter were away from home in pursuit of their trade.

Other factors influencing parental involvement in their children's education were also discussed. Key among them was the financial costs of basic education. The discussion has shown that, particularly in poor rural communities, the opportunity cost of education was considerable and so guardians did not hesitate to engage wards in income-generating ventures away from the classroom at the least opportunity. Because of their vulnerability, lone parents were more inclined to withdraw from or relax their engagement with a school. The study found, however, that the fear of God, namely that children were a blessing from God could sometimes be enough to boost parental involvement in school activities.

The chapter also touched on the tensions that characterise school-parent relations as a result of improper implementation of guidelines on the administration of corporal punishment as well as the use of naked threats and intimidation of parents. Finally, the use of English language at school was found to be a potential barrier to effective participation of illiterate parents and grand-parents who tend to dominate rural population. The tensions that characterise school-parent relations generally also characterise interactions between key fora related to school governance as will be shown in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Key Forums for Parental Involvement in Schools

6.0 Introduction to Chapter 6

In this chapter, I address the second and third research question: What are the fora for parental involvement and what forms of involvement are parents engaged in at the case study schools respectively. The interactions explored in these fora are shaped by the barriers such as lack of skills and knowledge, attitudes that were identified in the previous chapter. The objective of this study was to explore parental involvement in schooling from diverse perspectives, particularly those of less advantaged parents in two basic schools in rural Ghana. Accordingly, in this chapter, I analyse the forms of parental involvement in two fora that emerged as particularly important: the SMC which is part of the formal governance structure and the PTA because of its importance as a community-school relation/networks in the Ghanaian education system. The PTA though not part of the official governance structure is very important because of its role in fundraising and given the nature of the school communities under study. The analysis covers what each fora is and how it relates to parents specifically. Ghana's decentralisation policy prescribes the SMC as the formal forum for parental involvement in basic school governance, particularly in matters of financial management, school and teacher discipline (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001; Nkansah and Chapman, 2006, p. 509-532). In contrast, the PTA serves as a forum for building parental/community/school relations and networks (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001; Adam, 2005). The procedures and regulations covering the SMC and PTA activities in Ghana are covered in SMC/PTA Handbook (2001) and the main points have been summarised in Appendix A.

6.1 The School Management Committee

In Ghana, the major forum for parents' participation in school governance is the School Management Committee (SMC). In this section, I focus on establishing the forms of parental involvement in the SMC and how and why they are involved. The areas discussed include SMC membership and functions, parental involvement in school finance specifically the management of capitation grants, but also supervision of school fees/levies and accounts and in the monitoring of teachers.

6.1i Membership and Functions

The rationale for instituting SMCs was to engage qualified community members with technical wherewithal to support a school's internal administrators (Mankoe, 2002). In Ghana, in line with the GES, PTA/SMC (2001) policy, membership of a SMC is made up of the head teacher; a representative of the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assembly; chairperson of the Unit Committee; a representative of the Education Unit; a representative of the PTA (selected at a general meeting through voting); a representative of the village chief; two members of the teaching staff; and two co-opted members of the community who might be parents.

In theory, the appointment of individuals to the SMC should be devoid of any form of discrimination: a person's political leaning, religious background, tribe, or gender should not be considered in their appointment to the SMC. Membership should be based solely on merit (Mankoe, 2002). It emerged at the Community Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that SMC membership in School 1 was all male-dominated: most were activists of political party and/or influential people (e.g. those who had the greater authority to mobilise villagers for communal labour), but had little knowledge or experience in school management. The highest educational attainment of the SMC members at School 1 was Middle School Leaving Certificate. The inference from the

composition of the SMCs is that rather than provide a platform for parental participation, it creates room for a few, well-connected community members to assume responsibility for school management (Kingdon et al., 2014; Dunne et al., 2007). As one focus group discussion participant (FGD) puts it:

Appointment of people to serve on SMC largely recognises people in the community who are well-to-do and influential, leaving out the poor. Yes, affluent people offer support, especially with financial assistance; but they hardly attend meetings because of their business schedules. I have also noticed that only a few appointees do have their children in the school [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

As discussed in the literature review, the local elite and relatively better educated community members tend to take on the role of brokers of decision-making and, through their actions, close up the space for representation and participation in the affairs of the school by a more inclusive group of community members (Kingdon et al., 2014). In this sense, it would appear that the policy expectations for greater representation and involvement in school by parents was not being realised. In the case of School 2 community, the data revealed that most of the SMC members tended to be more experienced and knowledgeable in management and education matters. The highest educational attainment was first degree in Basic Education. It was agreed at the focus group discussions (FGDs), however, that in both schools, the position of SMC chairperson was restricted to a parent which is contrary to the stipulations in the PTA/SMC manuals.

Most participants in the focus group discussion in School 1 raised concerns about how some community members come to serve on the SMC and the extent to which due process was observed in their appointments:

I don't know how members are appointed to serve on the SMC. I feel the membership needs to be reviewed. If you listen to the type of contributions made by some members, you begin to wonder the criteria for their appointment – I strongly suspect that some of them are favourites of the ruling political party which makes the appointment anyway [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

The GES Manuals provide that the tenure of office for an executive member of the SMC shall be three years though a member shall be eligible for re-election to another additional three-year term only or one year in the case of a chairperson. As an SMC member commented:

The school administration is very strict on tenure of office for members including the executive position and would ensure that members stick to the stipulated number of years demanded by the SMC/PTA manuals regardless of one's personal contact or relations with management [Community FCD, School 2 Participant]

The focus group discussions also threw up questions about the length of years in relation to appointments to SMCs, some SMC members at School 1 community identified as being in office far longer than their mandated tenure of office. As one participant stated:

Our SMC chairman has served for 12 years, contrary to what we were made to understand from the beginning. Is he the only person with ideas to lead the committee? All efforts to get this anomaly rectified have proved futile as he has the full backing of the head teacher [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

This situation in which a head teacher at School 1 insisted on his favourite as chairperson even after completing his/her mandatory term of office compromises accountability and transparency. However, excellent the chairperson's performance, the rule must be upheld and enforced. This raises questions about people's suitability for the roles assigned them.

A critical determinant for appointment to an SMC is the issue of relevant skills, knowledge and expertise because of their combined efforts on school policy, administration, finance and development (Mankoe, 2002; MOESS, 2005). Yet, these criteria have been described as barriers to the democratic process because the majority of parents in rural communities are unlikely to contribute on account of their obvious lack of these skills (Adam, 2005). As one of the head teachers put it:

Getting the right calibre of members to serve on the SMC has been a major source of worry to us as head teachers. Our work as heads are often impeded by a number of appointees who may be financially okay but may lack the requisite educational backgrounds. Most of them lack the skills and knowledge to make meaningful contributions at meetings [Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant].

The quote above indicates that the ability of the SMC to participate in school management varies. It suggests that most SMC members in rural communities such as this one lack the capacity or skills to effectively participate in school management. Another head teacher corroborated the limited capacity and skills of many of the SMC members saying that:

The low educational attainment of some SMC members is a big blow to the governance system. Most of them rarely contribute to preparation of SPIP and budgets. They are often traders, farmers and fishermen with very low education but who find themselves as political appointees. Sometimes, the school is expected to co-opt other members to assist for a fee. More or less like consultants all because of low educational background of most substantive members. For these, the major responsibility is checking teachers' lateness and attendance to school. Apart from the chairperson and a few others who meet the minimum requirement, the rest are mere followers [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant].

A lack of suitable persons negatively affect parental involvement in formal school governance with ramifications for both school and community since, in some instances, head teachers relied on 'others' who perform some duties for a fee. It is clear that in

the study schools, membership of the SMCs left much to be desired. The question that then remains unanswered is where to apportion blame: the idiosyncrasies' of the head teacher or the environment.

6.1ii Training for SMC Members

The importance of training in school management for SMC members in poor rural communities like this one stems from issues such as lack of knowledge and skills (Watt, 2001; Mankoe, 2002; Adam, 2005). During the focus group discussions, most SMC participants were positive about the training organised for them but also pointed some shortcomings. For example, one SMC member indicated:

One month after my appointment, I received a letter from the Municipal Director of Education (MDE) instructing the head teacher to organise an orientation for the newly appointed members. The head teacher took us (new SMC members) through the GES SMC manuals on SMC/PTA. Unfortunately, we were not given copies of the manuals but were asked to come to the office any time we are in doubt about our roles and functions as SMC members[Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

A SMC member expected, as a matter of right, to be issued with his/her own copy of the manual. One SMC member commented:

At the orientation sessions, we were told to visit the school often to check teachers' lateness and absenteeism. We were also told to see the head teacher when in doubt of anything in connection with our functions as outlined in SMC/PTA manuals. Surprisingly, we were not given copies of the manuals [Community FGD, School 1 Participant]

The above quote makes it clear that the inability of the head teachers to provide orientation training for newly appointed SMC members is due to a lack of resources. This explains the lack of support to the SMC's role in school governance.

A major responsibility of the SMC members outlined was the need to check teachers' lateness and absenteeism. One SMC member described her understanding of the role thus:

We (new SMC members) were made to understand that the school belongs to us and that the school management or governance was therefore, in our hands and so, we should regularly visit the school to check on the teachers and the pupils as well. We must report teachers' absenteeism, lateness, drunkenness and other immoral behaviours to the head of the school, and then to the circuit supervisor, who, in turn, would take it up with those concerned [CommunityFGD, School 2 Participant].

Another SMC member noted:

We were told to visit the school often to check teachers' lateness and absenteeism. We were also told to see the head teacher when in doubt of anything in connection with our functions as outlined in SMC/PTA manuals [Community FGD, School 1 Participant]

The study shows that most SMC members in both schools had limited knowledge of their responsibilities and they tended to focus on teachers' absenteeism or lateness. However, as spelt out in the GES manual, other roles such as financial and property management, as well as conflict resolution were expected of SMC members and these should be addressed in the orientation sessions.

As indicated in the literature review, the capacity of rural communities to provide this sort of supports (refresher courses, seminars and in-service training) is challenged (Watt, 2001; Adam, 2005). One major challenge is that poor communities with low levels of education attainment often lack the time, money, confidence, skills and lack of cooperation of the school staff (Watt, 2001; Adam, 2005; Donkor, 2010). When asked why seminars, in-service training, orientation and refresher courses were not organised

for SMC members to enable them upgrade their skills and knowledge in school governance, one head teacher noted:

We are not able to organise seminars or in-service training for SMC members in this rural community due to a lack of money [Teacher, FGD, School 2]

Another head teacher added:

Most of the SMC members in this rural community have not had in-service training or seminars which could have fully enhanced their capacity to perform due to resource constraints [Teacher FGD, School 1]

The head teachers in the above quotes seem to be saying that the capacity of SMC members in rural communities to access in-service training and seminars stem from lack of money and/or resource constraints.

6.1iii The SMC and Parental Involvement in School Finance

A principal function of the SMC as discussed in the study schools was its role in financial management. The community focus group discussions highlighted the key role of the SMC in financial management through the capitation grant scheme and it also had oversight responsibility in the supervision of school fees/levies and accounts. These issues are discussed in the following sections:

6.1 iv The Administration of the Capitation Grant

This section is about the process involved in administration of the capitation grant and who is involved and what follows is about what SMC members and teachers think of it and their extent of involvement.

The capitation grant is based on a School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) (GES Guidelines for Distribution and Utilisation of Capitation Grants, 2005). The procedure for computing the plan begins with input from the teachers and then their head teacher, who, upon completion, has to discuss with the chairperson of SMC for approval (GES Guidelines for Capitation Grants, 2005, *ibid*). The approved SPIP is then sent to the Municipal Education Office for onward submission to the Ministry of Education (MOE) through the Ministry of Finance for final release of the funds. Upon release of the capitation grant to the district, the funds are finally deposited in the school account (GES Guidelines, *ibid*).

One reason why SMC members are not fully involved in the administration of the capitation grant is because they do not have the necessary technical know-how in its accounting. The drawing up, verification and authorisation of SPIP are technical matters that require people with the necessary expertise to thoroughly scrutinise the accounts. Unfortunately, most SMC members do not possess the requisite knowledge or skills in accounting and therefore left everything to the head teacher and his or her staff. As one SMC chairperson confirmed: "The examination of the SPIP (a major segment of the capitation grant) is very technical and complicated. I often find myself at the wrong place, but I cannot take the school to ransom and reject it even though it is prepared by the school administrators."

The above quote shows that SMC members lacked knowledge in the accounting of SPIP which made them rely on school administrators. This might compromise accountability issues in school governance.

Focus group discussions revealed that there is no reason to justify rushing the examination of capitation grant. It also revealed some mistrust between those involved.

As one SMC member put it:

I disagree with the contention that the undue delay in the release of capitation grant prevents a thorough examination of the SPIP and budgets. What prevents the SMC in bringing copies of SPIP and budget to a general meeting so that we can all make inputs?

In many cases, community members like the sample used in the current study, lacked skills and experience needed in drawing up of annual plans and budgets. Invariably, in such instances the task is left in the hands of head teachers and officials of Metropolitan/ Municipal/ District Directorates (MMDs). The practice sacrifices accountability and transparency because the MMDs are intended to play the role of impartial arbiters in such matters (GES, 2001). Such situations can give rise to a suspicion of malpractice even if this is not the case, as suggested by one SMC member. One respondent with a contact in the GES office thought that figures in the school SPIP and budgets were sometimes adjusted. SMC members in many cases are therefore nominally involved, by way of making their inputs in the local governance of the programme. This finding corroborates the assertion by Dunne et al., (2007) that core education decisions are not generally decentralised in a way that encourages broader local community participation in decision-making.

SMC members' and Teachers' Perspectives on Capitation Grant

During the focus group discussions, participants from both schools hailed the introduction of the capitation grant claiming that though there are still costs as it does not cover everything, it is cheaper:

Before the introduction of capitation grant, I had lost interest in the affairs of the school and so when they called meetings I seldom attended. But now that the

burden of paying fees has been lifted off my shoulders, I take keen interest in the affairs of the school [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

Another SMC member added:

The introduction of capitation grant has in a way reduced my financial burden as regard payment of tuition fees though there are other levies to be paid. I now feel more predisposed engaging in school activities. My interest in school activities is now re-kindled [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

In other words, most parents welcome the capitation grant even though it does not give them a complete financial 'reprieve' as they still need to pay other levies as PTA members.

On their part, however, most teacher participants expressed misgivings about the capitation grant saying it had brought hardships in school management because it was woefully inadequate and often released too late. The introduction of capitation grant had meant head teachers, for example must defend each and every expenditure item to the SMC. In addition, teachers complained that the capitation grant has led to most parents into thinking that everything associated with their children's education was free, catered for by the grant funds:

A time will come there will not be any school project like classroom block, library etc because anytime you mention it SMC members ask what are we doing with our capitation grants. It appears that these days the capitation must cater for everything in the school, except our salaries [Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant].

As one head teacher remarked:

Compared to the past, the collection of school fees and levies is not easy these days. Most parents feel they have no financial obligations because of the capitation grants. It's not surprising that these days we are unable to

undertake many developmental projects as we did prior to the advent of the grant [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant].

Teachers also reported that following the introduction of the capitation grant, some parents including SMC members, fail to provide books, uniforms and other basic materials to support their children. It can be inferred from the foregoing that, teachers expressed their disillusionment with executing projects since the inception of the capitation grant. This is saying that even those SMC members involved in the administration do not understand what is included and what is not.

In the focus group discussions, it became apparent that SMC members desired for more education on the utilisation of the capitation grant in order that they could make meaningful contributions to its management. As one SMC member noted:

I need to be better informed about the capitation grant so as to be better involved in its management. For now, though I'm a member of the SMC, my knowledge in which school items are catered for by the capitation grant and which are not is very limited. No wonder several people do not appear to be responsible in their children's education [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

The foregoing quote underscores the insufficiency of education given to the public in general and the inadequate preparation given to members appointed to join in school governance. Similar points were made by an SMC at School 1:

We need enough education on this capitation grants as the interpretation to it has been quite different and we get confused as to what is 'free' and what is not. The GES needs to come clear on the scheme [Community FGD, School 1 Participant]

Again, this suggests that public education about the capitation grant in both study communities has been inadequate.

A major disclosure from the focus group discussion was that SMC members were only contacted when the capitation grant was due for release and the school heads required the signature of the SMC chairperson. As one SMC member revealed:

After the money has been released and we begin to ask questions about how they were being used, we are told by school officials that management of the funds are the preserve of school authorities and the GES. We (SMC members) have no role in that [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

But on his part, one aggrieved SMC member questioned that:

How can the whole school SPIP and budget be approved by the chairperson only? Meanwhile instead of the chairperson bringing the accounts to a SMC meeting for our inputs, this is not done. I suspect foul play between the SMC chairperson and the head teacher [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

Another SMC member added:

This idea of SMC chairperson and the head teacher being sole signatories of capitation grant accounts need to be reviewed as it creates room for financial malfeasance [Community FGD, School 2 Participant]

It thus seems that in both schools, the SMC chairperson's approval signified the community's acceptance of the use of the capitation grant and that this was problematic since the mechanism lacked deeper engagement in terms of how funds are generated and utilised. In other words, on finances, the SMC members were consulted only when funds needed to be released and involvement in school governance was therefore very limited. These parents appeared to want more involvement in school governance. Perhaps surprisingly, teacher participants suggested that SMC members needed to be more actively involved in decisions about capitation grant funding:

SMC members should not leave the management of capitation grant business in the hands of head teachers and chairpersons alone. They need to be actively involved since their children stand the risk of losing out if wrong decisions are taken [Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant].

One can conclude that from the teacher's perspective, SMC members have, not fulfilled their duties if they allow only head teachers and the SMC chairperson to manage capitation grant. Directly or indirectly, teachers are alluding to issues of transparency and accountability in the disbursement of capitation grants. From the foregoing it seems that teachers either perceive malpractice on the part of the head teacher or are not satisfied with the lack of transparency in the disbursement of the grants.

Adequacy of the Capitation grant

Head teachers raised the issue of the inadequacy of the capitation grant as a whole, considering the financial obligations of the school. For example, they claimed funds were needed for the purchase of teaching and learning materials, examination fees, and repairs to building and furniture, amongst other things. One head teacher noted that:

Sometimes the school has to post-pone end-of-term examination because of the delays in release of capitation grant [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant].

Some class teachers also expressed their misgivings with the capitation grant scheme.

As one class teacher summarised it:

The capitation grants has increased enrolment in classrooms which has, in turn, increased our load in the form of marking amidst shortage of text books, tables and desks [Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant].

The above quote shows that what people think the capitation grant covers and reality is different in a school which does not have enough of what they need and if having increased enrolment, resource allocation has not kept pace is clearly a critical issue in a context where there is a funding gap. However, teachers tended to blame politicians who often make inaccurate presentation about capitation grant to the media a situation which lead the public, including SMC members to think that basic education was indeed free. A teacher observed that:

Politicians must be advised to desist from giving wrong impression about capitation grants because parents are then deluded into thinking that everything is free in basic education when this is not so [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant].

In view of misinformation by politicians (Yoshioka, 2010), there are still some community members who hesitate in paying other school fees/ levies. In this study, even some of the SMC members showed signs of disengagement from their official duties when impressed upon to pay additional cost in their children's education. The data collected for this study highlights how some community members refused involvement in school governance as a result of payment of additional cost in children's education (Mankoe, 2002; Adam, 2005). It also seems to be contradicted by the earlier quotes as regards hailing of the capitation grant. This is because people responded differently and had different views.

In sum, the introduction of capitation grant had created the impression that the government was going to cater for almost all services related to schools' developments. But a more thorough education prior to its introduction would have prepared parents for their involvement in the wider decentralisation policy of the government. Membership of the SMC participants in School 1 was all male-dominated: most were activists of political party and/or influential people (e.g. those who had the

greater authority to mobilise villagers for communal labour), but had little knowledge or experience in school management. The highest educational attainment of the SMC participants at School 1 was Middle School Leaving Certificate. In the case of School 2, most of the SMC participants tended to be more experienced and knowledgeable in management and education matters. The highest educational attainment at School 2 was first degree in Basic Education. The SMC participants lacked technical skills required for the preparation and presentation of SPIP budget, especially knowledge in accounting limited the active participation of most members in school financial management. SMC chairperson's approval of the capitation grants which signified the community's acceptance without it being discussed at general meetings and accounts left in the hands of the head teacher or his or her staff and officials from Municipal Directorate of Education raises concerns about transparency and accountability issues.

6.1 v Payment of Fees and Levies

This section focuses on SMC involvement in financial decision-making pertaining to supervision of school levies/fees and accounts. Decisions pertaining to failure to pay fees or levies require the approval of the finance committee. The Finance committee is an appendage of the SMC that governs a school and aims to ensure that the learners receive the best resources possible. Decisions reached by the finance committee are then made known to the PTA, teaching staff and entire school body. In Ghana, the school finance committee supervises issues relating to fees and levies and recommends appropriate sanctions (PTA/SMC, GES manuals, 2001; Gyan, 2007). Whereas the capitation grant is paid by the government, fees/levies are paid by parents.

In his study on Ghanaian schools, Gyan (2007) found that the Finance Committee members were often not consulted in the decisions regarding the failure to pay fees

and levies but were compelled to endorse the decisions already taken by the school management team, the (head teacher and senior staff). In the current study, the SMC operates over finances through the supervision of fees and levies paid by parents. This study found that parent involvement in decision-making regarding fees and levies varied to some extent in the study schools. Those in School 1 community were often not afforded the opportunity to play a full role in the governance of the school, as, in most cases, decisions were taken unilaterally by the head teacher and staff. For example, one SMC member, explained:

We get frustrated when school leaders shut door on our inputs. We are not given the chance to take full control in the school governing board, often; decisions are taken solely by the head teachers and his staff [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

The quote in the above suggests the SMC member's inputs in the school decision-making processes of the finance committee in terms of fees and levies become limited when sidelined by the head teacher and his staff. At School 2, the picture was different as the SMC members appeared to be actively involved in the financial decision-making. For example, one SMC member explained:

At several SMC meetings, financial matters are taken up. We talk to members who default on the payment of their children's school fees; we also take up issues relating to misappropriation of school funds [Community FGD, (School 2 Participant)].

As members of the school governing body, the head teacher and his staff have the power to expel pupils for failing to pay levies without the knowledge of SMC. It emerged from focus group discussions that SMC members expected the finance committee or administration to apprise them in case of expulsion, but they invariably did not hear anything. As one SGB member stated:

It is sad in most cases, I hear about the expulsion of pupils for failure to pay fees/levies through friends outside, even though I'm a member of the SGB [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

In School 1, it appeared that the authorities acted without parents who hold official roles in the decision-making process. Some parents in this community felt that as representatives of the school governing board, their involvement was limited and important decisions were often taken without their input, as one SMC member, indicated:

School authorities side-line us in decision-making process of the school [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

There are different committees such as disciplinary, welfare, sports etc. This might be considered to be a consequence of the multiplicity of decision-making fora in the schools. It is impossible for one to belong to all the three or so centres of decision-making so such scenarios are bound to occur. If school decisions were not sanctioned by SMC members, it seems that they refused to recognise them as legitimate and sought other means of involvement as one SMC member, passionately declared:

We will not accept the decisions by the head teacher and his staff on the dismissal of pupils for failing to pay fees/levies at the school without our inputs. We will mobilise other SMC members in the local community against such decisions until we are involved in the financial matters [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

As discussed above, it becomes difficult to determine which of the decisions deliberately left out some leading actors and which ones were made when some persons were not present for one or other reason.

In conclusion, at School 2, SMC members in that community appeared to be relatively more involved in the financial decision-making processes: However, the situation in School 1 where the head teacher has been accused of not encouraging broader consultations among those that mattered seemed to foment mistrust and discourage meaningful parental involvement in school activities by confining them to nominal role of endorsing decisions already taken. The scenario in School 2 touches on management or leadership style, why does one school seek to involve parents whereas another does not.

6.1 vi The SMC and Parental Involvement in the Monitoring of Teachers

Monitoring and supervision of basic education delivery by SMC involves school visits (MOESS, 2006). SMC members at both case study schools regarded their role as inspectorial and supervisory. They accordingly, monitored teachers as a measure of accountability through visits to the school to check for lateness, drunkenness and other unethical behaviour. During the focus group discussions, SMC participants complained that, often on their visits, they encountered teachers arriving late at school while others chatted with colleagues under a tree or on the veranda. Such practices flout the code of ethics of teachers. For example, one SMC chairperson reported that:

Teachers fail to return to the classroom after break, so, children continue playing until it is time to go home. I have also observed some teachers come to school drunk while others fail to report for duty or come to school late [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

And:

If GES had put up teacher bungalows in the rural communities, this persistent teacher lateness to school would have been curtailed because it is a tedious job for teachers who have to walk to school daily [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

A World Bank (2004) report found that teacher absenteeism and lateness is a huge challenge in Ghana. According to the report, absenteeism can be blamed on teachers

living at considerable distances from a school. In the current study, an SMC participant suggested that absenteeism had declined in the community, thanks to the monitoring role of the SMC:

Teacher absenteeism used to be very high in our rural schools but with the regular monitoring of SMC members, the situation has now changed for the better, though we learn some teachers are reportedly uncomfortable with our frequent visits [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

This suggests that, despite the beneficial effects, teachers at the receiving end of the SMC's vigilance were not always comfortable with the role.

De Grauwe et al., (2005) in their study of four West African countries found that the relationship between SMC members and school heads was usually characterised by conflicts rather than collaboration. SMC members are often regarded as intruders and the entire body perceived as counterweight to the head teacher's authority, leading to tension and conflicts. In the current study, it was evident that the apparent power play between SMC members and teachers with regard to monitoring and supervision of the school did not go well with some teachers. Class teachers did not hesitate to express their sentiments. As one of them complained:

Why are SMC members sitting on our happiness in the school? Why do they order us about with questions such as, "When did you report for school? Have you signed the attendance book?" They order as if they are our employers. It is high time the head teacher told them to stop [Teacher FGD, School2 Participant].

Another class teacher remarked:

The posture of SMC on our members is often an intrusion or if you like an invasion into our personal and professional space? Do they know how I completed training college? Have they been trained to handle pupils? What is annoying is that most of them are illiterate [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant].

In other words, the suspicion teachers hold about their relationship with SMC appears to be a potential source of conflict and tension with negative ramifications for school governance. According to Kendall (2007), from the teachers' point of view, the increased involvement of SMCs in school life is often seen as a threat. Until the advent of SMCs, teachers were secure in the knowledge that their professional conduct was not in doubt and went unchallenged – not even by the government. The arrival of SMC on the educational scene has changed the dynamics, the slightest indiscretion or misdemeanour could land one in trouble. However, in response to the emerging realities, one class teacher cautioned:

I have decided that if this intrusion by SMC members into our professional business continues, I will leave the community. After all, they are crying out for teachers, who do not want to accept postings into rural communities due to poor socio-economic conditions [Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant].

Again, the inference is clear, teachers consider activities of SMC members as intrusive; they (SMC members) can overstep their bounds. From the foregoing comment, some teachers have reached the threshold of their tolerance level. Disagreement over the roles of SMC and teachers in school governance invariably leads to confusion (Dunne et al., 2007; Edge et al., 2010). If an organisation is subject to ambiguities in a role definition or unclear boundaries of responsibilities, the stage is set for interpersonal frictions between stakeholders (Ramani and Zhimin, 2010). The implication from the foregoing is that SMC members are in a way prevented from exercising their legitimate role in school governance.

6.1vii Summary about the SMC

In this section, the discussion has focused on the fora for parental involvement in school? (Research Question 2) and the forms of involvement parents were engaged in at the case study schools? (Research Question 3). It has highlighted the SMC as a

formal governance forum for parental involvement in Ghana, including their composition, role in financial management as well as monitoring of school teacher discipline. It emerged that political and other considerations go into the process of appointments contributing to the appointment of SMC members without the requisite qualification which in turn affects their functioning and participation in school governance. For example, the drawing up, verification and authorisation of capitation grant under SPIP are technical matters that require people with the necessary expertise to thoroughly scrutinise the accounts. In many cases, SMC members in the current study, lacked skills and experience needed in drawing up of annual plans and budgets of the capitation grant. Invariably, in such instances the task is left in the hands of head teachers and officials of Metropolitan/ Municipal/ District Directorates (MMDs). This practice sacrifices accountability and transparency because the MMDs are intended to play the role of impartial arbiters in such matters (GES, 2001). A key finding of the study is that parental involvement in decisions regarding fees and levies varied to some extent in the two school communities. In the case of School 2, SMC members were actively involved in the financial matters, but in the case of School 1 in particular, it was largely in the hands of the head teacher and his staff without active involvement of the SMC members. This practice raises issues about transparency and accountability in school governance which can affect parental involvement. SMC involvement was seen as threat for the teachers who are supposed to know the governing rules and regulations. In one case, a teacher had contemplated quitting the community if the perceived intrusion of SMC members continued. This non-appreciation of the rules of engagement by people supposed to know means SMC members are in way hindered from playing their legitimate role in school governance. In the face of such suspicion, very few members will insist on performing their legitimate role. In the next section, I discuss PTA as school- community relation/networks and a fund-raising body.

6.2 The Parent Teacher Association

The major forum for building parental/community/school relations and networks is the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) unlike the SMC which is mandated to exercise general oversight supervision. In this section, I focus on establishing the forms of parental involvement in the PTA and how and why they are involved. The areas discussed include PTA membership and functions, parental involvement in the PTA fund-raising, fundraising to support pupils and teacher welfare, links between PTA fund-raising, parental involvement and examination performance and capital building through the social functions of the PTA.

6.2 i Membership and Functions of the PTA

The national education policy, jointly authored by GES, PTA/SMC (2001), states that membership of the PTA comprises parents, guardians (with children in the school) and teachers all of whom are assumed to have interest in the children's education. The executive committee of a PTA consists of between six to nine members selected at a general meeting, among whom there shall be a chairman, vice chairman, secretary (teacher), financial secretary (parent), treasurer (parent), 1st committee member (parent), 2nd committee member (parent), 3rd committee member (head teacher) and school welfare officer (Ex-officio member). As much as possible at least one-third of the committee shall be women. All executive members are eligible for two terms of two years each.

In Ghana, the main mandate of the PTA is to assist in school maintenance and infrastructural repair, teacher and children welfare provision, fund-raising activities and the upkeep of pupil performance standards. PTAs achieve these through maintenance of discipline, as well as provision of school textbooks, teacher accommodation, and teaching/learning materials (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001; Nkansah and Chapman, 2006;

Kamba, 2010). It is expected that school can hold a general meeting at least once a term although an emergency meeting may be requested by the chairperson or head teacher (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001). During the focus group discussions, it emerged that the majority of PTA participants in School 1 community were farmers, fisher folks, with a sprinkle of public sector workers. The educational attainment of members of the PTA executive committee of that school included in my study was higher than that of School 1. Perhaps, PTA members considered voting for executives with higher educational attainment. Focus group discussions disclosed that there were more men than women in the executive committee.

6.2 ii Parental involvement in PTA Fund-raising

PTA funding comes from member contributions (usually dues), special levies and voluntary donations from stakeholders such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the community (GES PTA/SMC (2001)). It is common for a PTA to impose special levies on its members to initiate project like toilets, libraries, and classroom blocks. PTAs also motivate pupils and teachers through awards/prizes etc; they also purchase teaching and learning materials; renovate or repair buildings; sponsor recreational facilities; transport teachers and pupils to competitions, ceremonies etc; and make funds available to the school to meet diverse needs (PTA/SMC Resource Handbook (2001)).

The study revealed PTAs' major function in fund-raising activities as stipulated in the GES, PTA/SMC manual. PTAs are not only actively involved in developmental projects but also financial management. The funds raised were used to finance provision and maintenance of school infrastructure, as incentives toward improved examination performance. Besides these roles, PTA featured as forum for building parental/community/ school relations and social networks. In the current study, it was

found that the PTAs of two schools were dutifully performing those roles. The focus group discussions in the current study underscored parents' active engagement in fund-raising to support the activities of both study schools. For example, one PTA member explained that:

The PTA in my school owns a farm from which maize and cassava are produced on large scale for sale and each member is obliged to offer free labour on the farm. Proceeds from the farm complement the other levies imposed on parents, all of which finance school projects [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

Another PTA member added that:

The PTA in my school has acquired a large plot of land for forestry products business; the proceeds would be used to finance the activities of the PTA in the school [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

Farming as a source of fund-raising reflected local conditions, an innovative project by whoever mooted the idea. For rural dwellers, limited cash flow did not mean dereliction of duty. They complemented payment in cash with payment 'in kind' though when the farm produce is sold it also yielded funds. The farming project was a good example of adaptation to the environment in which they found themselves because urban dwellers would have had more difficulties raising funds through farming. It emerged that community members were more concerned about the safety of proceeds from fund-raising initiatives. Maintaining a bank account appeared to be the source of assurance that kept members at bay. In the current study, it emerged that proceeds were deposited in accounts at the rural bank, with the head teacher and PTA chairperson as signatories. As one PTA chairperson indicated:

Revenues generated from the farm are given to the treasurer and financial secretary who deposit them at the bank. Withdrawals are, however, made with signatory approval of the head teacher and the PTA chairperson. Issues on withdrawals are discussed and approved

before they are carried out [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

If diligently followed, such a transparent practice is likely to boost confidence of PTA members which should, again, enhance their involvement in the running of a school.

Interviews with teachers underscored the importance of fund-raising in the affairs of the school, claiming that without that it would have been difficult for the school to own certain facilities. One head teacher intimated that:

Through such income-generating ventures such as school farms, we could not have purchased a set of drums as well as the set of jerseys [Teacher FGD, School 2].

Another teacher noted that:

Under the guidance of the Municipal Director of Education, we are using the funds raised from the woodlot forestry products for the construction of additional classroom for the school [Teacher FGD, School 1]

The above quotes suggest fund-raising as an important financial contribution to the school by the community or PTA members. This implies school improvement also depends on the financial support of the PTA. However, in both school communities, the focus group discussions told the same story: the need to levy parents for school projects had become critical when issues were raised at various PTA meetings to the effect that children at the lower primary level were forced to sit four to a desk; pupils were obliged to use surrounding bush as a toilet; and such implementation of the School Feeding Programme (SFP) as there was had failed to provide improved canteen facilities. This situation moved the PTA to initiate the necessary steps to facilitate improvement. As one PTA rationalised:

The PTA in my school made a special request to the Municipal Assembly office for assistance, unfortunately the reply was that its share of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) had been in arrears for two quarters. As a result, we were made to take up the bill [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

Yet, another PTA member justified levies on the grounds that:

The PTA sought to bear the cost of the 100 desks from its School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) budget, which had already been submitted but had not been released at the time. Considering the urgency of the situation, the PTA agreed to bear the cost [Community FGD, School 2 Participant]

While outlining the PTA activities, the foregoing quotes also, indirectly, faults the authorities for the late release of District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) and capitation grants in School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) budget. The two quotes above allude to the difficulty rural schools face when demanding their share of budgetary allocations from local government entities. This echoes the views made in the literature about decentralisation and lack of local capacity to effectively participate in decentralised service (De Grauwe et al., 2005; Akyeampong et al., 2007; Robinson, 2007). In the current study, the focus group discussions illustrated the challenges poor rural PTA members, mostly low-income earners eking out a living in subsistence occupations, go through in their attempts to get involved in provision and maintenance of school physical resources, teacher welfare, teaching and learning materials and ceremonies

In most developing countries, the relevant literature shows that parents have been found to provide financial (e.g. PTA subscriptions, levies) or in-kind contributions such as materials and labour for the construction or maintenance of school buildings when it comes to involvement in school governance (See for example, Geo-Jaja, 2004, p. 309 [in the case of Nigeria] and Chikoko, 2007, p.36 [in relation to Zimbabwe]. During their

focus group discussions, most PTA participants of both schools held the view that the principal function of PTAs was the provision and maintenance of school infrastructure. Accordingly, their contribution in the focus group discussions tended to focus on projects that had been implemented in their respective schools. For example, one PTA chairperson noted that:

The PTA in my school has put up a new kitchen facility for the School Feeding Programme (SFP) though it is yet to be commissioned by the Municipal Education Office. Even though we (parents) cannot make ends meet, we must literally squeeze water of stone to undertake these projects, for the sake of our children and teachers [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

The above quote indicates that in spite of PTA members' financial difficulties, parents are prepared to go extra mile, making sacrifices to ensure the smooth operations of the school.

During the teachers' focus group discussion, they confirmed the financial and non-financial support given by parents, pointing out that the name should have been Parents' Association because they (teachers) merely did the secretariat work of PTA meetings; they were seldom called upon to make financial contributions which appear to be the association's main preoccupation. They as teachers, in conjunction with pupils, were rather the beneficiaries of such levies. One head teacher elaborated that:

One area worthy of mention is PTA members' support towards provision of school infrastructure. Anytime, school authorities brought a need to their attention, the PTA members toiled to provide it. It's an indication of parents' commitment to their children's education [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant].

Another head teacher corroborated this claiming that:

Even though most of the PTA members in the community are not financially well-endowed, when it comes to

execution of projects, the enthusiasm and commitment they exhibit is highly commendable. PTA members volunteered to supply stones, water and sand for the construction of that classroom at no cost to the school.[Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant].

It can be inferred from such sentiments that the PTA was a major if not the main funder of school development projects at the local level. All study participants maintained, during the focus group discussions, that the dues paid by PTA members went a long way to funding school projects. In other words, funds from governmental sources were not enough. However, one PTA member declared that:

I find it unpleasant attending PTA and other school events only to be asked to pay levies which I cannot afford [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

Thus, PTA members felt that the insistence on payment of levies was a hindrance to their involvement in school matters. For instance, despite their desire to attend meetings and some events, financial considerations often deterred them from doing so. The implication here is that PTA members stayed away from meetings and other events for fear of being asked to make financial contributions. However, on their part, teachers attributed parents' failure to attend meetings to the high levels of illiteracy in the community because illiterate members often found it difficult contributing to debates during meetings. The disparity in viewpoints on the causes underlying PTA members' failure to attend meetings is an interesting finding. Referring back to the discussions in chapter 5, it highlights the conflicting pressures arising from economic challenges such as high schooling costs, and the need to work to provide for family sustenance. The economic situations in the case of lone parents were identified to be very challenging. Another issue identified had to do with disciplining of people for their inability to supervise and monitor homework in a context where most of the parents were found to be illiterate or had limited formal education. Parents were also identified to be deterred

from active participation in school events/meetings due to payment of school fees/levies in a context where most of them were found to be poor. Intimidation of parents was another barrier to parents' participation in school. These underlying factors might be responsible for peoples' inability to be fully involved in school activities/events/meetings.

6.2 iii PTA Fundraising in Support of Pupils and Teachers Welfare

In Ghana in recent times, newly recruited teachers at the pre-university level have had to endure the unpleasant situation of working without remuneration for about a year after their first appointment (MOESS, 2006). The current study found that at School 2 some PTA funds- raised through levies – was used to pay salary advance to newly recruited teachers who found themselves in that situation:

The PTA has supported me with salary advance until I started receiving salary, otherwise life here in those days would have been unbearable. Of course, I will forever remain most grateful for that [Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant].

However, in School 1, teacher participants admitted that the weak financial position of the PTA made it unable to support newly recruited teachers with a salary advance:

The PTA has not been able to support newly recruited teachers with financial problems with salary advance due to financial challenges even though it wished to do so [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant]

The above quote suggests that the extent to which the PTA could support newly recruited teachers with salary advance depends largely on its financial strength even though the desire or interest might be there. Head teacher participants, explained that PTA's assistance with teachers' salary advance was, indeed, a welcome relief. Otherwise, both the school and affected staff would have been put in a very awkward situation. As one head teacher remarked:

The payment of salary advance out of PTA funds has been of immense relief to our newly-recruited teachers and, indeed, to the school. Before that facility became available, our newly engaged staff found all manner of excuses for lateness, lack of class assignments and sometimes outright absenteeism. I learn that the school where PTA finances are not so sound to be used to fill in the gap, the consequences for teaching and learning are dire [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

This implies that PTA activities have a direct bearing on teaching and learning in any given school and community. In the foregoing scenario, PTA funds were used to alleviate the plight of newly-recruited teachers. Without that fund, one can only imagine the consequences in teacher morale. That in School 1 community, the PTA does not have the wherewithal to support such a good cause might be attributed to weak finances on the part of members and not a deliberate act of insensitivity. The issue of fund-raising in support of pupils and teacher welfare has links to the SMC monitoring and teacher absenteeism as discussed in the SMC section. SMC involvement in monitoring teachers appeared to have threatened the cordial relations between the teachers and SMC members in both school communities to the extent that one teacher at School 2 contemplated quitting the community if the perceived intrusion of SMC members continued.

6.2 iv Links between PTA Fund-raising, Parental Involvement and Examination Performance

This section addresses the links between parental involvement in school events specifically fund-raising activities and school examination results. It highlights benefits of PTA funds to both examination results and improved morale of teachers.

In both schools, performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) was an important concern for PTA members and said to be a key motivating factor in enrolling their children in school. PTA members were inspired to engage in their

children's education when the performance in the BECE was positive. One PTA member asserted:

I want my child to pass the BECE and continue up to secondary and university education levels. Two years ago, the school organised extra classes for the children which enabled it to achieve a 100 per cent pass. This encourages us to get actively involved in the school [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

Another PTA member added:

If the school authorities do well and assist our children to pass the BECE, I do not see why I should not attend PTA and other school-wide events, since the results are likely to be positive. We expect the teachers to assist our children to pass their exams and, in return, we will financially support them and the school [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

The above quotes suggest an important way in which the relationship between the PTA and school is mutually supporting. This was because it was examination results that determine whether the child could proceed to senior high school (SHS) and eventually have tertiary education. For PTA members, the value of education was directly measured by the children's performance. PTA members said they looked forward to examination results that enabled their children to read and write and communicate in English and earn them a good job to look after them (parents) in the future. PTA members indicated that they made the effort to keep children in school due to their (parents) expectations. Hence, their willingness to make all the sacrifices to see their wards through school:

I want my child to come out successfully from school as a medical doctor so that in future he can take good care of me in my old age. I have decided that come what may, I will pool all my resources to ensure that the dreams come true [Community FGD, School 2 Participant]

Another PTA member indicated her interest regarding school performance and future prospects:

I want my ward in the school to pass out well and become a banker so that in future, he can put up a building and purchase a posh car for me. Even though I'm poor and cannot pay school fees, I will do my best out of my farming business to ensure that he complete a university education [Community FGD, School 1 Participant]

The above quotes suggest that in rural communities, PTA members' expectations and perceptions about school quality appear to be linked to improved examination results. This has links to previous discussion in chapter 5, where parents asked children to work while schooling to support the family with the expectation that upon passing examination successfully, they could secure better jobs to be able to look after their parents in future.

It was found during the focus group discussions that PTA mobilised funds to reward teachers whose subject areas recorded positive performance at the BECE. Such teachers were called in turns at the general PTA meetings and given awards:

Through PTA, we mobilise funds and foodstuffs as our token appreciation of teachers whose subject areas recorded high pass at BECE at our general meetings [Community FGD, School 1 Participant]

And:

We present teachers sometimes with cash and foodstuffs with the aid of PTA to enable them give of their best and ensure 100 percent pass at BECE [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

The above quotes speak volumes about the extent parents are prepared to go individually and collectively as PTA members to ensure that teachers are motivated in order to 'deliver'; namely to help the children come out successfully in their BECE. This

is interesting to consider because teachers are also poor and it is because it is what the parents have to give. As indicated in the literature on decentralised governance, studies in rural Ghana have shown that, the demand for basic schooling is influenced by parents' perception of the quality of education provided by school and their children's capacity to access post-basic education (Lavy, 1996; Pryor and Ampiah, 2003). The implication is that, school enrolment choice decisions by the poor in rural Ghana would be influenced by perceived and real benefits of education.

On their part, teachers expressed appreciation to parents for donation of funds and foodstuffs which according to them have influenced their efficiency to work. One head teacher explained:

Even though most parents are poor, they do their best to appreciate us when the BECE result is positive. We are grateful to them and promise to work harder than before to record 100 percent pass [Teacher FGD, School 2 Participant]

Thus teachers appreciate incentives provided by parents to motivate them. Another teacher intimated:

Some of the parents do not wait to present their cash and foodstuffs at general PTA meetings but do so at home when the BECE results are released. We assure parents of our preparedness to work to ensure 100 percent pass [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant]

From the above quotes, teachers indicated that in rural communities, poor PTA members' donation of cash and foodstuffs went a long way to boost their morale and contributed at both schools to improved performance in BECE. Teacher appreciation is a stimulant of positive effort at ensuring improved examination performance.

The findings from the above demonstrate the importance attached to good examination results. Even though some parents did not have the capacity to pay school fees, the

expectation of good examination results, especially one that ensured further education for their wards kindled parents' interest in their children's schooling. Such an outcome was found to inspire PTA members to be involved in their children's schooling. Contrary to the view that rural parents do not value or invest in the education of their children (MOE, 2002), the findings of this study suggests that some rural parents value their children's education very highly and that they have to give a lot from a position of having very little.

Importantly, the study also suggested that poor examination results and low quality provision could act as a disincentive to parental involvement with school. Some PTA members held the view that if schools were not meeting their expectations in terms of good examination results, then; it was not worth investing in children's education. These PTA members questioned the returns to education for children who do not enter post-basic education which they find adds some value to their lives, investing in basic education becomes an unattractive proposition. One PTA member lamented:

Those students who could not successfully pass their BECE and went beyond that are currently roaming, still depending on their parents for survival. I will not waste my resources on their education. I have even stopped paying PTA dues and levies [Community FGD, School 1 Participant]

Another PTA member questioned:

Why should I waste my little financial resources on children's education when their performance at BECE was very poor? I have asked them to join me in the farming business [Parent 1, School 2 Participant]

The above quote illustrates how parents got disinterested in the education of their children and, consequently, school activities as whole. This suggests that the extent of PTA members' payment of school fees and levies can depend on the performance of

their wards in examination – be it the school's or the child's fault. The findings from this section also show that PTA members' decision to enrol their children in school is to some extent based on what they perceive schooling to offer both to the child and the family.

6.2 v Capital Building through Social Functions of PTA

As shown in the relevant literature, the transmission of information within social groupings enables individuals to keep abreast of the latest development through a friend, a friend's friend, or a professional associate (Coleman, 1988). Social capital is thus, captured from embedded resources in social networks as well as serving as assets within those networks (Lin, 1999, p.28). The related literature (Coleman, 1988; Lee and Bowen, 2006) underlines parental involvement through the PTA platform in ensuring that community voices are heard and incorporated into decision-making in schools. This is a process that has the potential to create social capital (Coleman, 1988). The PTA reaches beyond the school and into the community to provide more extended forms of community support.

The PTA mobilised parents to participate in school events. In the current study, PTA members were found to share the belief that informal interactions at their children's school helped them to interact with fellow parents and ascertain information about their children's progress from school authorities. In focus group discussions, some participants identified attendance at school cultural festivals as a way to get to know people and also influence their children's performance in school. At such festivals, pupils were trained to exhibit different types of Ghanaian folk songs and dances in a keenly contested programme. PTA members also lauded the opportunity to meet important people in society including government officials invited to grace such occasions. One PTA member thought that they offered them an opportunity to network:

You meet lot of friends and make new friends as well. The forum provides an opportunity to establish contact with teachers and heads of school. [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

This suggests relationships which allowed PTA members to access information from school, teachers, and other parents which spurs them on to get even more involved in school affairs. One PTA member added that:

At times, not only pupils dance but parents also join them making the programme interesting. You see children in high spirits as they give a round of applause to their parents. In some instances, parents give recitals to enrich the children's renditions [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

PTA members who witness children dance tend to be motivated to participate in school activities. In focus group discussions, it was noted that there were also other pupil activities through which parents could meet one another, make new friends and establish contact with the children's teachers and thereby influence their children's academic progress. One PTA member with no formal education commented:

From time to time, school authorities invite us to participate in inter-school athletic competitions, football matches and drama sessions, especially when important government dignitaries are visiting [Community FGD, School 1 Participant].

It emerged that the schools on several occasions received donations of sporting items such as football for training towards competition. Some parents go to watch their children – even at training. This kind of concern, according to the teachers, was a major source of inspiration to pupils who work hard in order to impress not only teachers but their parents as well. For example, one teacher noted:

Parents in this community need to be highly commended for their role in giving morale support to their children while they compete for the school. This has helped a

number of pupils to develop interest in sports [Teacher FGD, School 1 Participant].

The practice of parental commendation in the above quote has the potential of enhancing involvement in school activities. Focus group discussions also revealed that speech and prize-giving days provided parents with the opportunity to make new friends and ask teachers what they could do to assist their children perform better in order to win more prizes. On such occasions, deserving pupils were awarded prizes mostly supplementary books in subject areas. Additionally, PTA members were presented with household items such as televisions, refrigerators, clothes as incentives for them to work harder in the interest of the school. PTA participants explained that parents also had the chance to discuss among themselves what the school expected of them, as far as their children's academic success was concerned. For example, one PTA member noted:

Meeting other parents at the last speech and prize-giving day gave me the opportunity to get acquainted with people I had not met in the village before. One new friend, an award winner, told me what he had been doing for his boy in school that had prompted the school to present him with a prize [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

Another PTA member noted:

The encouragement given by my daughter's class teacher during the last year's speech and prize-giving day made me actively involved in the child's studies at home [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

In focus group discussions, most PTA members bemoaned the failure by school authorities to officially invite them to such informal activities like cultural and sporting events – even if some of them managed to attend on their own. One PTA member

appreciated the efforts of a friend and a community member who invited her to such occasions:

I am grateful to a fellow PTA member and an Assembly Member whose efforts made me come to witness in cultural festivals held at the school last year. They were really stimulating and I will forever remember those two occasions [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

From the foregoing focus group discussion extracts, it appears that in the absence of formal invitation, other PTA members were found instrumental in getting others to attend such gatherings and participants appeared to show gratitude to community members who got them to attend.

In the current study, it emerged that the PTA was an effective channel for networking at the community level. Most PTA members agreed that PTA initiatives made it easy for them to relate to one another on diverse social issues such as engagements or marriages, christening, bereavement and raising 'soft loans'. In these instances where the public needed to be made aware, the PTA executive mobilised members to mourn with the bereaved family. One PTA member expressed her satisfaction thus:

One major thing worthy of commendation in the school is the enthusiasm of PTA members in times of bereavement, for example, they came around to offer financial and moral support. This gesture needs to be sustained as it has rekindled my interest in school activities [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

Another PTA member remarked:

At functions such as funeral or social gatherings, you meet a number of parents from all the near-by communities, which gives us the opportunity to discuss school matters in an informal setting [Community FGD, School 2 Participant].

Such informal engagements by PTA somehow engendered parental interest in school activities for the benefits of many stakeholders.

6.2 vi Summary about the PTA

In this section, the focus has been of the PTA as key fora in the development of school-community relations (addressing Research Question 2). The two study schools were clearly benefiting from the PTA not only in the provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure but also in the provision of resources used to support the learning of pupils. Besides these functions mandated by the GES, SMC/PTA (2001) Manual, funds from the PTA at School 2 two Associations were being advanced to newly-recruited staff before they begin receiving their salaries from the state, sometimes as late as twelve months after assumption of duty. Monthly contributions, levies as well as proceeds from activities such as farming and forestry are the main sources of PTA funds. Financial practices such as maintaining bank accounts from which withdrawals are done by officials (head teacher and PTA chairperson) who are different from those who do the deposits (treasurer and financial secretary) go a long way in assuring members of the safety of their financial contributions. However, in spite of such transparency, the poverty levels of the study communities raise the ethical issue of how long such schemes can be sustained. The study found that parents who managed to engage in community networks such as unscheduled visits, sporting and cultural events as well as speech and prize giving day cherished the occasions as they met other parents and in particular school authorities and government officials who came to grace such occasions.

6.3 Chapter Summary

In this section, I have addressed both Research Questions 2 and 3 and compared two key fora, the SMC and the PTA and talked more directly about how these do or do not

encourage parental involvement. I have linked the SMC to governance and decentralisation policy whereas the PTA was found to be a forum for building parental/community/school relations and social networks and also a fund-raising body.

This chapter depicts the partnership between schools, families and communities as overlapping. It suggests that each have a stake or influence in the education of the child and that interest and influences of the stakeholders in a child's education are mutual. For example, the SMC fora appeared in some cases to ensure that schools perform to the best of their abilities by monitoring teachers to check for lateness, drunkenness and other ethical behaviours in both school communities. The PTA fora appeared to view its role rather differently with the PTA fora focused mostly on aspects of school development such as provision and maintenance of school structures and furniture, teacher welfare and maintaining links/ networks with both communities for school improvement. The child's education appears to be more effectively achieved when there is a partnership or collaboration between school, family and community.

Lastly, this chapter highlights relational and issues of equity. The situation in one school where the head teacher has been accused of not encouraging broader consultations among those that mattered in financial decision-making seemed to foment mistrust and discourage meaningful parental involvement in school activities by confining them to nominal role of endorsing decisions already taken. SMC methods of directly attempting to monitor teachers appeared to have threatened their professional authority to the extent that one teacher at School 2 contemplated quitting the community if the perceived intrusion continued. This is a source of tensions and conflicts in school governance. In some cases, PTA members were discouraged from active engagement with school communities as a result of levies which they could not afford. This is a source of economic imbalances or inequities in school governance.

Chapter 7: Summary, Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for Policy and Practice

7.0 Introduction to Chapter 7

In this chapter, I summarise the key findings discussed in the analytical chapters through a discussion of the research questions. I then discuss the contributions of this research to knowledge and conclude with some recommendations for policy and practice. The chapter ends with some final reflections and suggestions for future research.

7.1 Summary of Main Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

In this section, I discuss the main findings relevant to each research question

RQ1: What are the barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement in the case study schools?

Decentralisation is intended to improve the operational efficiency and promote a more responsive approach to education service delivery at the district, community (urban and rural) and school level (World Bank, 2004; Akyeampong et al., 2007), however, from the current study, parents in the two rural school communities appeared to have been placed at some considerable disadvantage when it comes to ensuring greater responsibility for contributing and managing education service provision. Specific barriers to and facilitators of parental involvement identified in this study relates to socio-economic factors, literacy and language, communication, relationships and discipline.

Socio-economic factors as a barrier to Parental Involvement

In rural communities, schooling costs have been found to be disincentive to active parental involvement in schools (Avotri, 2000; Oduro, 2000; Akyeampong et al., 2007). The study findings reveal that the recent introduction of the capitation grant could not absolve all the parents' financial concerns. Parents claimed providing such items as school uniform, sandals, food and exercise books took a huge toll on their meagre family budgets. It is therefore, important that any examination of parental involvement takes cognisance of the unique profile of each parent, since it determines the capacity and inclination of parents to engage with the school. The current study also found that some parents in spite of their economic difficulties were found to mobilise funds and foodstuffs as their token appreciation of teachers whose subject areas recorded high pass at BECE. Parents' contribution in kind rather than with actual money is actually a way of very actively involving people.

Literacy and Language as a barrier to Parental Involvement

The low literacy level among parents and community members limited their involvement in structures like the PTA and SMC (Adam, 2005; Donkor, 2010). The current study reveals that most parents had low literacy and limited formal education to be able to help children in their home work. In spite of this handicap, most parents relied on extended and community members for assistance. Thus, when parents are eager to see their wards through formal education, their own illiterate status does not become a handicap. Evidence from the current study reveals that even though GES directives on the conduct of PTA/SMC and other school-wide events (GES, PTA/SMC, 2001) recommended the use of local language, the use of English was clearly a real barrier to parental involvement in school activities.

Communication as a barrier to Parental Involvement

Communication takes many forms within the different fora. While it can act as barrier can also act as facilitator. The study findings suggested that more openness on the part of school staff engendered increased parental involvement in school affairs. For example, in School 2 community, parents expressed the view that increased contacts with teachers led to increased confidence and even more contacts. Parents were sometimes excluded from communication that were important within formal fora, for example, in the current study, the situation in School 1 community where the head teacher was accused of not encouraging broader consultations among those that mattered was likely to foment mistrust and discourage active parental involvement in school activities.

Relationships and Discipline as barrier to Parental Involvement

As discussed in the literature review, the relationship between various actors in education can be viewed on a continuum such that at one end it is very conflictual characterised by tensions and conflicts, while at the other end it is very positive in nature (Baquedano-Lopez et al.,2013). It certainly calls into question the idealistic notion that everyone is working to promote cooperation and harmony. The study highlights some tensions and challenges that can arise from the overlapping spheres of influence between parents, PTA, SMC and school.

Even though the GES abhors the practice of corporal punishment and frowns on intimidation, verbal or physical in schools (GES, 2001), the findings from the current study reveal that verbal abuse and the practice of corporal punishment to children for their inability to do homework was common in both school communities. The practice led to open hostilities between teachers on the one hand and parents and children on the other. This finding implies that the posture or attitude of school heads/ teachers

affect parental involvement in school. Another source of power struggle revealed by the current study was in the monitoring role of the SMC. SMC members are often regarded as intruders and the entire body perceived as counterweight to the head teacher's authority, leading to tension and conflicts (De Grauwe et al., 2005; Afful-Broni, 2005; Dunne et al., 2007).. In the current study, it was evident that the apparent power play between SMC members and teachers with regard to monitoring and supervision of the school did not go well with some teachers particularly in school 2 community. The school staff felt as professionals, they had the mandate to handle school matters and that the SMC's intervention was perceived as an intrusion.

This section has highlighted that parents, schools and communities have different interests, expectations and capacity and for that matter mutual collaboration might suffer some challenges in the form of tensions and conflicts as discussed above. The way out as suggested by this study includes equity measures involving schools' organising training for school governors and other empowerment approaches (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013) and creating space for parental involvement in school decision-making. These findings echo the views expressed by Torre and Murphy (2016) that school leaders and teachers must have welcoming attitudes and take responsibility for reaching out to parents to build strong relationships and ensure that communication occur on regular basis in an atmosphere of mutual respect and care.

RQ 2: What are the fora for parental involvement?

This study has allowed me to identify the two broad areas for parental involvement that can be loosely described as formal and informal. It is interesting to note that not all parents interviewed were involved in these formal and informal fora. The formal fora relate to governance and decentralisation policy and the study suggested that the two that were key were the SMC and PTA. For example, the SMC fora appeared in some

cases to ensure that schools perform to the best of their abilities by monitoring teachers to check for lateness, drunkenness and other ethical behaviours in both communities. The PTA fora appeared to view its role rather differently with the PTA fora focused mostly on aspects of school development issues such as provision and maintenance of school structures and furniture, teacher welfare and maintaining links/networks with both communities for school improvement. The informal fora were forums for building parental/community/ school relations and networks and these relate most closely to the PTA. In the current study, these provided the means for the mobilisation of parents to participate in school events such as cultural festivals, sporting activities and speech and prize-giving day. PTA members in the current study were found to share the belief that informal interactions at their children's school helped them to interact with fellow parents and ascertain information about their children's progress from school authorities. It also served as a supportive community network through which bereaved members of the PTA were given special donations. School finance, teacher motivation, teacher discipline and accountability are all examples where there was found to be some overlapping role between these two key fora. Both the PTA and SMC have school, community and parent representation highlighting the interconnectedness in school governance.

RQ3: What forms of involvement are parents engaged in at the case study schools?

Specific forms of parental involvement identified in this study related to financial matters and governance frameworks. These relate to the formal and informal fora identified above. There is also less formal involvement at the individual level and those involved as a parent might at times be a grandparent or other relatives as one was an aunty in School 2 community. This links explicitly to what I have argued about the term 'parent', the need to recognise the importance of the extended family system as a child

in this context belongs to the extended family, not his/her biological parent so everyone does what they can to help in the child's upbringing (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999).

Parental Involvement in Financial Matters

The study highlighted parental involvement in financial matters as one key area and it cuts across the SMC and the PTA but looks different in the two fora. The SMCs were involved in the administration of the capitation grant scheme in both school communities. The procedure for release of the capitation grant begins with input from the teachers and then their head teacher, who, upon completion, has to discuss with the chairperson of SMC for approval (GES Guidelines for Capitation Grants, 2005). On parental involvement in the Finance Committee, an appendage of the SMC, the current study unearthed a discrepancy between the two study schools. Whereas parents used the committee as a channel to engage in financial matters in School 2, the same cannot be said of School 1 where the head teacher and staff appeared to have acted in financial matters without the involvement of the school governors. This has to do with the leadership or management style which touches more on whether people feel they are having the capacity to contribute or not seeing the role of parents as valuable or as an encroachment on their professionalism.

The study also highlighted the very important role of the PTAs in both case study schools where they were engaged in fund-raising to support their respective activities. School 1 was into maize and cassava production whereas School 2 was engaged in woodlot forestry products. In the current study, the PTAs of both study schools used levies collected from members for the provision and maintenance of school infrastructure, to support teachers' welfare and as incentives to boost performance in public examinations. In School 1, most parents felt the payment of PTA levies and

other school contributions constituted a hindrance and some said it was a deterrent to their involvement in school affairs. These are communities where poverty and survival and intergenerational disadvantage issues are common. It appears there is also some fear or coercion on the very disadvantaged communities of parents expected to make up the shortfalls elsewhere in the system but also some making an excellent effort to support.

Parental Involvement in Governance Frameworks

A second key form of involvement disclosed by the current study relates to governance frameworks. However, this role relates only to the SMC fora. In Ghana, SMCs are mandated by the GES Handbook (2001), to superintend over four main areas of basic education, namely, school policy, school development, school administration and finance. From the current study, the two SMCs appeared to focus more on the monitoring of teachers than on issues relating to school policy and development. SMC members who were interviewed attributed the neglect of these other parts of their official functions to the lack of appropriate orientation about those roles. Somehow, members in both SMCs claimed that, in spite of their inexperience in management, monitoring came easy to them, all they needed to do was to make regular visits to schools to check for teacher lateness, drunkenness and other immoral behaviour. In both schools, increased involvement of the SMC in monitoring was not welcomed by teachers. In fact, in School 2 community, a teacher threatened to quit if what he considered as an intrusion continued. Study findings reveal that parents filled this role despite being in many cases rather poorly equipped by their own education and that this could be positive in developing understanding of education.

7.2 Contribution to Knowledge

There is an extensive literature on parental involvement and consistent with this, the study approaches parental involvement as a social construction. This involves different stakeholders including individual parents, proxy parents, community networks, formal forums for parental involvement linked to governance, infrastructure and accountability structures and more informal forums that have individual as well as collective functions. Government/policy regulates much of this involvement through decentralisation policies. The study therefore highlights the value of research that explores multiple perspectives on parental involvement. There is a considerable premium placed on the collaborative efforts of the SMC, PTA, schools and their wider communities which fits well with the overlapping spheres of influence framework (Epstein, 1995; 2001). However, this framework needs to include greater consideration of contextual factors, including the availability of skills and knowledge, competencies and networks. A key contribution of this study is therefore increased awareness of the importance of interconnectedness within rural contexts and the way in which networks including parents are culturally constructed. These have been shown to be influential in determining not only the forms of parental involvement in school but also how these play out. This is so important because an appreciation of the influences of the wider Ghanaian socio-economic and cultural dynamics help in designing the development of pragmatic steps towards improving parental involvement in rural contexts.

This study has also shown that in rural contexts parental involvement has to be understood as extending beyond the biological parent. This is because the extended family plays a vital role in the education of the child either as long-term caretakers of - pupils or momentarily when the seasonal rhythms of parental occupations demand (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful, 1999; Care International, 2003; Chapman and Nkansah, 2006). The study has illustrated how these extended family relations

determine the pattern of parental involvement in formal and informal school functions. What this study has shown is that in rural contexts, building relationships with a pupil's extended family is an important factor in parental involvement in school governance.

The current study also unearthed issues similar to those raised elsewhere in the literature pointing to a continuum of involvement beginning with the basic decisions as to whether to send children to school or not. In Ghana, a plethora of studies confirm this continuum (Canagarajah and Coloumbe, 1997; Oduro, 2000; A CARE International, 2003; MOESS, 2006). In the present study, it emerged that in deprived communities, poor parents viewed their children as economic assets, expected to contribute to the meagre family or household incomes because in the short term sending them to a school brought no economic gains to the family. Nevertheless, this study suggests that rural families are beginning to exhibit a more sophisticated understanding of the value of schooling than is always recognised in the literature as some parents, often with the support of extended family or community members, were found to invest in their children's education. Motivations were found to be varied and included the expectation that they will be catered for in their old age as well as being a basis for their children getting a good job or occupying top positions in society.

The study has also highlighted the importance of linking parental involvement in rural and resource constrained communities to school governance. A major issue in Ghana is the decentralisation agenda and the extent to which this takes account of the specific challenges in rural contexts. The study has shown how factors operating outside formal governance bodies assume an important role for formal fora. In focusing on policy outcomes without recognising the importance of other factors such as the role of the extended family and more informal fora, the Central government or Ministry of Education in Ghana appears to have focused on the mechanisms for forging how

schools and communities should work together, assuming this leads to increased parental involvement in schools. The study like others has illustrated how poverty compels children to work alongside their schooling sometimes at the request of mothers to support family sustenance and that parents are unlikely to be able to facilitate children's schooling in the face of economic challenges. This study has extended literature by showing that parents face similar resource constraints and lack of requisite support within formal governance structures.

The research also supports previous research in arguing that parental involvement is essentially relational. For example, it was evident that the apparent power play between SMC members and teachers with regard to monitoring and supervision of the school did not go down well with some teachers to the extent that a teacher in School 2 community threatened leaving if what was perceived to be an intrusion continued. This is not an intrusion, however, but a mandated role (GES, 2001). It is therefore about policy and how it is sometimes received. Importantly, the suspicions teachers held about the SMC were a potential source of conflict and tension and they had potential negative ramifications for school governance. At the heart of effective collaboration are good parent-school relations that bring parents and teachers together in an atmosphere of care, trust and respect. The study shows that it is possible to foster collaboration between parents and teachers through positive welcoming attitudes, regular communication and the valuing of their involvement in schools. Consideration of these relational aspects needs therefore to extend to governance as well as the more usual parental roles.

7.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

In this section, a number of implications for policy and practice are outlined. They include strategies the government of Ghana might adopt to address some of the

findings of the study to promote greater parental involvement at the basic school level in rural areas.

7.3 i SMC Membership and Appointments

Decentralisation policies are based on the assumption that democratic processes will be strengthened by ensuring greater local participation in the decision-making processes at both school and community levels (World Bank, 2003). In establishing SMCs and PTAs, the Government of Ghana hoped to achieve these lofty objectives.

As found in the literature, in developing countries, the local elite and relatively better educated community members tend to take on the role of brokers of decision-making and, through their actions, close up the space for representation or participation in the affairs of the school by a more inclusive group of community members (Kingdon et al., 2014). This creates a potential for the few educated ones to influence the course of development of society. This defeats the expectation for greater representation and involvement in school governance as exemplified in the present study. Pryor (2005, p.196) points out that Ghana's Ministry of Education's shallow understanding of the dynamics of rural living has led to pseudo-participation by parents, and suggests that without a more sophisticated grasp of rural and community life and work, the realisation of decentralisation policies may remain elusive for many years to come. In the light of this, it is suggested that policies about SMC and PTA in school governance must be adapted to reflect contextual differences.

Among other factors, the extent of SMC and PTA involvement in school governance depended on members' educational attainment, life experiences, including knowledge in school affairs, and more importantly, opportunities provided by the MOE and the school concerned. In the current study, the majority of SMC and PTA members in both school communities were fishermen, farmers and traders, with most of them holding

Middle School Leaving Certificates. Many SMC members in School 1 community were also political appointees and/or influential people, who lacked knowledge of management and experience in educational matters. Moreover, the study findings reveal that SMC members were not given sufficient orientation about their roles to equip them for the tasks ahead and therefore had limited knowledge of their responsibilities. In other words, SMC members were denied the capacity-building measures that would have made them function more effectively. It is therefore suggested that the GES liaise with school authorities to organise adequate training programmes for SMC members to enable them upgrade their knowledge and skills in governance issues.

7.3 ii Increasing Involvement and Accountability in Financial Matters

Increasing involvement and accountability in financial matters is key in terms of governance and involvement and failing in both SMC and PTA. Parental involvement was mostly found in fund-raising activities as in the payment of PTA dues/levies which went into the provision of school infrastructure. This was critical because of undue delay in the release of District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) and capitation grants as a result of bureaucratic financial system at the central government but was a major burden on poverty-stricken parents and guardians who had to bear the brunt of the implementation of the policy. To relieve parents of this burden, it behoves upon, the government acting through all public sector agencies such as the Ministry of Education (MOE) through Ghana Education Service (GES) to the Administrator of the District Assemblies Common Fund to ensure prompt release of the capitation grants

A major obstacle to transparency in the management of school finances was the practice whereby SMC chairperson could endorse the release of capitation grants without prior discussion or approval by the entire SMC membership. (See Chapter Six).

To address this problem, given that contexts and needs will vary, this thesis advocates for improving understanding of the capitation grant scheme. For example, the GES authorities could convene a forum, in a town hall meeting at which all residents, current and prospective parents are educated on the modalities of the capitation grants, its composition, generation, mode of release and impact. Such sensitization exercises could go a long way to keep parents abreast of their rights and responsibilities in regard to their financial contributions to basic education.

7.3iii Developing Spaces more conducive to Parental Involvement

A key finding of this study is that parental involvement in children's education depends on the spaces created by the school in addition to the trust and recognition accorded parents by the school staff. A high quality education delivery environment, as determined by the managerial practices of a school is likely to improve and promote relationships (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Crozier and Davies, 2007). In School 1, even though teachers claimed that they were sending invitations to such events through pupils, parents seemed to find all manner of excuses to stay away from the school. The solution seems to lie in strengthening the communication channels between the school and community as well as mutual respect between the two.

As found in the literature, parents are not hard to reach but rather it is the school (Crozier and Davies, 2007). In this sense, the effectiveness of the school system in getting parents involved is very important. Schools need to recognise the nature of the parent body and/or their particular needs or perspectives. Schools should as a matter of priority be committed to monitoring parents' attendance at meetings and support them to be actively involved in their children's home learning and school activities.

7.4 Final Reflections

This study has highlighted not only the contextualised nature of parental involvement but also the interconnectedness of the different stakeholders, individual parents, school staff and the wider community but also the value of research that explores multiple perspectives on parental involvement in children's education. Within rural communities as this study has shown it is the way in which social networks and interconnectedness are culturally constructed which influences the way in which involvement of parents or guardian occurs.

From a small scale study like this I have insights that are useful but I cannot generalise. It has left unanswered a number of critical questions including how lone mothers' involvement in children's education can be deepened. Are other rural contexts in Ghana very different or the same in terms of parental involvement in children's education? What do policy-makers think about training rural parents to prepare them for their involvement in the SMC and PTA? In terms of policy, this study suggests that policies designed to encourage parental involvement in school governance must reflect not only important contextual differences but also the dynamics between structures and participants.

References

- Adam, F. (2005). Community Participation in School Development: Understanding Participation in Basic Schools Performance in the Nanumba District of Ghana (Unpublished thesis). University of Bergen, Norway.
- Addae-Boahene, A. and Arkorful, K. (1999). Our Responsibilities: SMC/PTA Resource Handbook (Getting Started). Community Alliances Project Working Document. Ghana: United States Agency for International Development.
- Afful-Broni, A. (2005). Critical Issues for Educational Leadership in Ghana. Accra: Tyre Company Ltd.
- Akyeampong, A. (2004) 'Aid for Self Help Effort? A sustainable alternative route to basic education in Northern Ghana' *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 7(1):41-52.
- Akyeampong, K., Djangmah, J., Oduro, A., Seidu, A. and Hunt, F. (2007). Access to Basic Education in Ghana: the Evidence and the Issues, CREATE Country Analytic Report. Brighton: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex.
- Alhassan, S. and Adzahlie-Mensah, V. (2010) Teachers and Access to Schooling in Ghana. CREATE Pathways to Access. Research Monographs No.43, Brighton: CIE, University of Sussex.
- Arnott, M. and Raab, C. (2000). The Governance of Schooling: Comparative Studies of Devolved Management: Routledge-Falmer.
- Astone, N. and McLanahan, S. (1991). Family structures, parental practices, and high school completion. *American Sociological Review*, 56, 309-326.
- Avotri, R. (2000) Gender and Primary Schooling in Ghana. Brighton: IDS/FAWE.
- Babbie, E. (2007) The Practice of Social Research (11th ed) Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Baquadano-Lopez, P., Alexander, A. and Hernandez, J. (2013) Equity Issues in Parental and Community Involvement in Schools: What Teacher Educators Need to Know. *Review of Research in Education* 37, pp. 149-182.
- Bell, J. (2005). Doing your Research Project: A Guide for First Time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Sciences, 4th Edition. Berkshire: Open University Press, p.167.
- Bennell, P. and Akyeampong, A. (2006). *Is there a teacher motivation crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia?* London: DFID.

- Benson, C. (2000) 'The Primary Bilingual Experiment in Mozambique, 1993-97' *International Journal for Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 3(3) :141-159
- Berg, B. (2001). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences(4th ed.). Needham Heights; MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Blaikie, N. (2000). Designing social research. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Blaxter, J., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (2001). How to research(2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bloom, B. (1990).The new direction for educational research. Alterable variables. Phi Delta Kappan: 382-385.
- Blunch, N. and Verner, D. (2000). Revisiting the Link between Poverty and Child Labour: The Ghanaian Experience, Working Paper; Washington DC: World Bank.
- Boakye, K. (2001). Reintroducing caning in our schools? *Ghanaian Chronicles*, April3, p.1
- Bojuwoye, O. (2009). Home School partnership – a study of opinions of selected parents and teachers in Kwazulu Natal Province, South Africa, *Research Papers in Education* 24(4): 461-475
- Boyle, S., Brock., A., Mace, J and Sibbons, M. (2002). Reaching the Poor: The 'Cost' of Sending Children to School. Synthesis report: Education Research Paper No.47. London: DfiD.
- Bray, M. (2001). Community Participation in Education: Dimension, variations and Implications. UNESCO, Paris.
- Bray, M. (1996). Counting the full cost: Parental and community financing of education in East Asia, Washington DC: World Bank.
- Bridgemohan, R. (2002). Parent involvement in Early Childhood development in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Johannesburg: University of South Africa.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. and Evans, G. (2000). Developmental science in the 21st century: Emerging questions, theoretical models, research designs, and empirical findings, *Social Development*, 9(1), 115-125.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6), 723-742.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The Ecology of human development: Experiment by nature and design. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Brown, C. (2005). A Study on Child Trafficking in Sending Communities of the Central Region of Ghana. University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast: Centre for Development Studies (Research Report).
- Cameron, L., and Williams, J. (2005) Is the relationship between socio-economic status and health stronger for older children in developing countries? Department of Economics, University of Melbourne.
- Canagarajah, S. and Coulombe, H. (1997). Child Labour and Schooling in Ghana. Background Paper on Ghana Labour Markets and Poverty. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Canter, L. (2000) Assertive discipline, in C.H.Edwards (ed), Classroom Discipline and Management, 3ed. MA, USA:John Wiley & Sons.
- Care International (2003). Reaching Underserved Populations with Basic Education in Deprived Areas of Ghana: Emerging Good Practices. Washington DC: USAID.
- Case, A., Paxson, C. and Ableidinger, J. (2004). Orphans in Africa: parental death, poverty and school enrolment. *Demography* 41(3), pp 483-508.
- Casely-Hayford, L. (2002).The Social Impact of Poverty on Educational Attainment: Lessons from the North: Paper presented at the fifth International Conference on the child -Children and Poverty: The impact of our Economic, Social and Political Choices. Montreal, Canada. 23-25, May 2002.
- Chapman, D. (2000) "Trends in educational administration in developing Asia" *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36 : 283-308
- Cheng, S. and Powell, B. (2007). Under and beyond constraints: resource allocation to young children from biracial families. *American Journal of Sociology*. 112 (4), 1044 – 94.
- Chikoko, V.(2007). 'Negotiating Roles and Responsibilities in the context of Decentralised School Governance: A case study of one cluster of schools in Zimbabwe'. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35(1): 22-38
- Christenson, S. (2004). The family-school partnership: An opportunity to promote the learning competence of all students. *School Psychology Review*, 33(1), 83-104.
- Cohen, L., Marion, L. and Morrison, K. (2007). Research Methods in Education, London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L.and Morrison, K. (2000). Research Methods in education (5th ed.) London and New York: Routledge Falmer.Coleman, J. (1987). Families and Schools. *Educational Researcher*, 16 (6): 32-38.

- Coleman, J. (1988). Social Capital in the creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95-120.
- Coleman, J. (1987). Families and Schools. *Educational Researcher* 16 (6) 32-38
- Creswell, J. (2009). Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches, Sage Publications, London.
- Creswell, J. (2005) Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (2nd ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson
- Creswell, J. (2003). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and Mixed methods approaches (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage
- Crozier, G. and Davies, J. (2007). Hard to reach parents or hard to reach Schools? A discussion of home-school relations, with particular reference to Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(3) 295-313.
- Dampson, G. and Mensah, D. (2010). Parental involvement in Homework for children's school Success: A study in Cape Coast Municipality. *Journal of Academic Leadership*, 8.2, pp.1-9.
- De Grauwe, A., Lugaz, C., Balde, D., Moustapha, M. and Odushina, D. (2005). 'Does decentralization lead to school improvement? Findings and Lessons from research in West Africa, 'Journal of Education for International Development, 1 (1) Available from www.equip123.net/JEID/articles/1-1.pdf Assessed on 20 July, 2015]
- Dei, G. (2004). Schooling and Education in Africa: the case of Ghana, African World Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2007). The Good Research Guide for Small-scale Social Science Projects (3rd Ed) Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Denscombe, M. (2003). A Good Research Guide for small scale social research project. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Desforges, C. and Abouchaar, A. (2003). The impact of Parental involvement, Parental support and Family Education on Pupil Achievement and Adjustment: A Literature Review: London: Report of Education and Skills.
- Donkor, A. (2010). Parental Involvement in Education in Ghana: The Case of a Private Elementary School. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 4(1) 23-28.

- Drummond and Stipek (2004). Low-Income parents' beliefs about their role in children are academic learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104 (3), 197-123.
- Dunne, M. and Ananga, E. (2013) Dropping Out: Identity Conflict In and Out of School in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 196-205.
- Dunne, M., Akyeampong, K. and Humphreys, S. (2007). School Processes, Local Governance and Community Participation: understanding access. CREATE, Research Monograph, No. 6, London.
- Dunne, M., Pryor, J. and Yates, P. (2005). A research companion for the social sciences. Open University Press. New York, NY.
- Eccles, J. and Harold, R. (1996) "Family-School Link": How do they affect educational outcomes? Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Edge, E, Tao, S, Riley, K and Khamsi, K. (2009a). Teacher quality and parental participation: An exploratory review of research and resources related to influencing student outcomes, London: Action Aid and the Institute of Education.
- Edge, K., Marphatia, A., Legault, E and Acher, D. (2010). Researching Education Outcomes in Burundi, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda. Using participatory tools and collaborative approaches. London, UK: Action Aid and the Institute of Education: University of London.
- Epstein, J. and Salinas, K. (2004). Partnering with families and communities. *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 12-18.
- Epstein, J. and Van Voorhis, F. (2001). More than minutes: Teachers' Roles in designing homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3), 181-193.
- Epstein, J., Coates, L., Salinas, K and Sanders, M. (2002) School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Actions, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, C A: Corwin Press
- Epstein, J (2001). School and Family Partnership: Preparing educators and improving schools. Boulder CO: Westview
- Epstein, J. (1995) School/ Family/ Community partnerships: caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 707-712.
- Epstein, J (1987) Parent involvement: state education agencies should lead the way. *Community Education Journal*, 14(4), pp. 4-10.

- Essuman, A. and Akyeampong, K. (2011) Decentralisation policy and practice in Ghana: the promise and reality of Community participation in education in rural communities. *Journal of Education Policy*, 26, 513-527.
- Essuman, A. (2009) Perspectives on Community-School Relations: A Study of two Schools in Ghana. Unpublished Dphil Thesis, University of Sussex.
- Essuman, A. (2008). Education decentralisation: A review of policy, practice and outcomes, International Professional Doctorate, *Critical Analytical Review*, Sussex School of Education, Brighton, University of Sussex.
- Faguet, J. and Sanchez, F. (2006). Decentralization's Effects on Educational Outcomes in Bolivia and Columbia. <URL: <http://www.sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dedps/477> (Accessed 15/11/2012).
- Fan, A. and Chen, M. (2001). Parental Involvement and student academic achievement: a meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 1-22.
- Feagin, R., Orum, A. And Sjoberg, G. (1991). A Case for the case study. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.
- Fentiman, A., Hall, A. and Bundy, D. (1999). School Enrolment Patterns in Rural Ghana: a comparative study of the impact of location, gender, age and health on children's access to basic schooling. *Comparative Education*, 35(3), pp.331-349.
- Gall, M. Gall, T and Borg, W. (2007). Educational research: an introduction (8th ed) Boston: Pearson International Edition)
- Gazely, L. (2012). The impact of social class on parent professional interaction in school exclusion processes: deficit or disadvantage? *International Journal of Inclusive education*, 16 (3): 297-311.
- Geo-Jaja, A. (2004). "Decentralisation and Privatisation of Education in Africa: Which Option for Nigeria?" *International Review of Education*. 50(3-4), 307-323.
- Gerson, K. and Horowitz, R. (2002). Observation and Interviewing: Options and Choices in qualitative research in action. London: Sage.
- Ghana Education Service (2001). SMC/PTA Handbook: Improving Quality Education through Community Participation.
- Ghana Statistical Service(GSS)(2010). Population and Housing Census. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2008). Ghana Living Standards Survey. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.

- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2000). Population and Housing Census. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Government of Ghana (GOG) (2004). White Paper on the Report of the Education Review Committee, Accra: Government of Ghana.
- Gray, D. (2004). Doing research in the real world: London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Gyan, K. (2007). The impact of Parent-Teacher co-operation on the Child: the case of Kasoa in the Awutu-Senya District of Ghana (Unpublished Long-Essay), University of Education, Winneba.
- Hashim, I. (2005). Exploring the Linkages between children's independent Migration and Education: Evidence from Ghana .working paper T-12. Brighton: Sussex centre for Migration Research.
- Hill, N. and Craft, S. (2003). Parental School Involvement and School Performance. Mediated pathways among socio-economically comparable African American and Euro American Families, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95, 74-83.
- Hill, N. and Taylor, L. (2014). Parent School Involvement and Children's academic achievement. Pragmatics and Issues. Current *Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(3), 161-164.
- Holloway, S., Yamamoso, Y., Suzuki, S. and Mindnich, J. (2008). Determinants of Parental involvement in Early Schooling: Evidence from Japan. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*. Vol 10(1) 2008. (Accessed October 20, 2014).
- Hoover-Dempsey, K., and Sandler, A. (1997). Why do Parents become involved in their Children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67 (1), 3 – 42
- Izzo, C. Weissibery, P., Kaspro, W. and Fendrich, M. (1999). A longitudinal assessment of teacher perception of parent involvement in children's education and school performance: *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(6), 817-839.
- Jeynes, W. (2010). Parental involvement and Encouraging that involvement: implications for School-based Programs. *Teachers College Record*, 112(3), pp.747-774.
- Jeynes, W. (2005). The effects of parental involvement in the academic achievement of African American youth, *Journal of Negro Education*, 74(3), 260-274.

- Jeynes, W. (2003). A meta-analysis. The effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 35, 202-218.
- Johnson, B and Christenson, L. (2004). Educational research: quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches. (2nd Ed) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Johnson, R and Kyle, S. (2001). The Determinants of Girls' Educational Enrolment in Ghana.. Working Paper, New York: Cornell University.
- Jovett, S. and Baginsky, M. (1991). Parents and Education – Issues, Options and Strategies. *Journal of National Foundation for Educational Research*, 34 (1) 119 – 204.
- Kamba, K. (2010). Education development in Southern Sudan: A Study of community participation and democratic leadership in two primary schools in Central Equatorial state, Southern Sudan: Oslo University College: Faculty of Education and International Studies.
- Kamberellis, G. And Dimitriadis, G. (2005) Focus groups, Strategic Articulations of Pedagogy, Politics, and Inquiry in N K Denzin and Y S Lincoln (Eds) The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research 3rd Ed (887- 907), London: Sage Publications
- Keilland, A. and Toro, M. (2006). Children at work in Africa: Child labour Practices in Africa. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers
- Kendall, N. (2007). "Parental and Community Participation in improving Educational Quality in Africa: Current Practices and Future Possibilities" *International Review of Education* (53)5-6:701-708
- Kingdon, G., Lutler, A., Aslan, M., Rawal, S., Moe, T., Patrinos, H., Beteille, T., Baneji, R., Parton, B. and Sharma, S. (2014). A rigorous review of the political economy of education systems in developing countries. Final Report: Department for International Development.
- Kirk, J. (2006). The impact of women teachers on Girls education. Advocacy Brief. Bangkok, UNESCO.
- Kohl, B. (2003). Democratizing decentralization in Bolivia: The law of popular participation, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 23(2), 153-164.
- Krueger, R. and Casey, M. (2000). Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kusi, H. (2012). Doing Qualitative Research: a guide for researchers, Accra: Emmpong Press.
- Kvale, S. (2009). Interviews, London: SAGE.

- Lankshear, C and Knobel. M. (2004). *A Handbook for Teacher Research: From design to implementation*: Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Lee, J. and Bowen, N. (2006). Parental Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43 (1), 193 – 218.
- Lemmer, E. and Van Vyck, J. (2004). 'Schools reaching out: comprehensive parent involvement in South African Primary Schools. *African Educational Review*, 1(2), pp259-267.
- Levis, S. and Naidoo, J. (2006). School governance and pursuit of democratic participation: Lessons from South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26,415-427.
- Lin, N. (1999). Building a network theory of Social Capital. *Connections*, 22(1), 28-51.
- Litvack, J., Ahmad, J. and Bird, R. (1998). *Rethinking Decentralisation in Developing Countries*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Magara, E. (2005). *Barely Family Literacy Skills among parents and children in developing countries: A case study for Uganda*. Makerere University. Oslo, Norway.
- Mankoe, J. (2002). *Educational Administration and Management in Ghana*. Progressive Stars Printing Press: Madina, Accra.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Mason, A and Rozelle, S. (1998). *Schooling Decision, Basic Education and the Poor in Rural Java*, Washington D C: World Bank.
- Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative Researching*. Thousand Oaks; CA Sage Publications.
- McFarlane, J. (2000). *A critical investigation into course development for the preparation of school leaders*. Unpublished PhD. Thesis. Rhodes University. Grahamstown.
- Mcloyd, V. (1990). The impact of economic hardship on black families and children: Psychological distress, parenting, and socio-emotional development. *Child Development*, 61,311-346.
- McMillan, J. and Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in Education: Evidence-based inquiry*. (6th ed) Boston: Pearson Education.

- McNeal, R. (1999). Parental Involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on Science Achievement, truancy and dropping out, *Social Forces* 78: 117 – 144.
- Mcube, V. (2007). The perception of parents of their role in the democratic governance of schools. *South African Journal of Education*, vol. 29/83-103.
- Mensah, J. A (2001) Parental Attitude towards Girl-child Education in Awutu-Effutu –Senya District of Ghana, *Unpublished Thesis*, University of Education, Winneba.
- Merriam, S.(1998). Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass).
- Merriam, S. (1988). Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass).
- Miles, M. and Huberman, M (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis, 2nd Edition. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.
- Mills, G. (2003) Action research. A guide for the teacher research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Ministry of Education (2005). Education Sector Annual Report 2005. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2004). Education Sector Annual Report 2004: Accra: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2002). Education Sector Review (ESR). Accra: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MOESS) (2006). Preliminary Education Sector Performance Report. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- Mitik, L., Decaluwe, B. (2009). Market Labour, Housework and Schooling in South Africa: Modeling the Effects of Trade on Adults' and Children's Time Allocation, Centre for Development Consulting.
- Muijs, D. (2004). Doing quantitative research in education with SPSS. London: Sage Publications
- Naidoo, R. (2002) Educational decentralisation in Sub-Saharan Africa – *espoused theories and theories in use*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, Orlando, FL., March 6-9, 2002.
- Ngorosho, D. (2009). Key Indicators of home environment for educational research in rural communities, *Child Industrial Res*, 3:327-348.

- Nkansah, G. and Chapman, D. (2006) Sustaining Community Participation: What remains after the money ends? *Review of Education* (52) pp.509-532.
- Norton, A. Aryeetey, E., Korboe, D. and Dogbe, D. (1995) Poverty Assessment in Ghana, Using Qualitative and Participatory Research Methods. Poverty and Social Policy Discussion Paper Series, Washington DC:World Bank.
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling in Knowledge: the hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research, *International Journal of Social Science Methodology* 1(4) pp.327-344.
- Obeng, C. (2002) Home Was Uncomfortable: School Was Hell. A Confessionalist Ethnographic Account of Belief Systems and Socio-Educational Crises in the Schooling of Ghanaian Rural Girls. New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc
- Oduro, A. (2000). Basic Education in Ghana in the Post-Reform Period, Accra: Centre for Economic Policy Analysis
- Opoku-Amankwa, K. (2009). 'English only language-in-education policy in Multilingual classrooms in Ghana' language, culture, curriculum, 222, pp. 121-135.
- Patton, M.(2002). Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Third edition. United States: Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. (1990). Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods, 2nd Edition. London: SAGE Publications.
- Pena, D. (2000). Parental involvement: influencing factors and implications. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94(1), 42-54.
- Pilon, M. (2003). Foster Care and Schooling in West Africa. Paris: IRD/UERD found at [http://www.crin.org/foster%20care%20education%20 west%20 Africa](http://www.crin.org/foster%20care%20education%20west%20Africa). PDF (Accessed 15:08:2011).
- Powell, G., Chinake, J., Mudzingi, D., Maambira, W. and Mukutiri, S. (2004). Children in residential care: The Zimbabwean experience. New York: UNICEF.
- PROBE (1999). Public Report of Basic Education in India, New Delhi : Oxford University Press
- Pryor, J. (2005). Can community Participation Mobilise Social Capital for improvement of Rural Schooling? A case study for Ghana, *Compare*, 35(2), pp.193-203.

- Pryor, J. and Ampiah, J. (2003). Understanding of Education in an African village: The role of information and communication technologies, London, Development for International Development
- Quartey, O. (2007). The changing roles of the family in the Economic system of Ghana. *Education in Ghana: Challenges for 21st Century*, vol. 2, pp. 65-76.
- Rajin, C. and Becker, H. (1992). What is a case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-18
- Ramani, K. and Zhimin, L. (2010). A survey on conflict resolution mechanisms in public secondary schools: A case study of Nairobi Kenya.
- Reay, D. (1998). Engendering social reproduction: Mothers in the educational marketplace. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 19, no 2:195-209
- Republic of South Africa, South Africa Schools Act (SASA) 1996, White Paper on Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools, Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Riordan, C. (2004). Equality and Achievement: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Robinson, M. (2007). Introduction: Decentralisation Service Delivery? Evidence and Policy Implications, *IDS Bulletin*, 38(1), 1-6.
- Rose, P. and Al Samarrai, S. (2001) Household Constraints on Schooling by Gender: Empirical Evidence from Ethiopia. *Comparative Education Review*, 45 (1):36-63
- Seitsinger, A, Felner, R, Brand, S. and Burns, A.(2008). A Large scale examination of the nature and efficacy of teachers' practices to engage parents: Assessments, parental contact, and student-level impact. *Journal of School Psychology*, 46,477-505.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1994). Building Community in Schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Shabaya, J. and Konadu-Agyemang, K. (2004). Unequal access, unequal participation: some spatial and socio-economic dimensions of the gender gap in education in Africa with special reference to Ghana, Zimbabwe and Kenya. *Compare*, 34(4) pp.395-424.
- Shultz, T. (1988) 'Education investment,' in H. Chenery and T. N. Srinivasan(eds). *Handbook of Development Economics*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishers B.V.

- Sikes, P. (2004). Methodology, procedures and ethical concerns. In C. Opie (Ed.). *Doing educational research: A guide to first time researchers* (pp.15-33). London: Sage Publications.
- Singh, K., Bickley, P.G, Trivette, P., Keith, T.Z., Patricia, P.B. and Anderson, E. (1995). The effects of four components of parental involvement on eighty-grade student achievement: Structural Analysis of NELS-88 data. *Psychology Reviews*, 24(2), 219-317
- Sirin, S. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: a meta-analytic review of research. *Review of Educational Research*, 75 (3), 417- 453.
- Sliwka, A. and Istance, D. (2006). Parental and Stakeholder 'voice' in schools and systems. *European Journal of Education*, Vol 41, No 1, 2006
- Smith, B. (2005). Getting started in educational research. School of Education. University of Leicester.
- Struwig, F. and Stead, G.(2001). Planning, designing and reporting research. Pretoria: Pearson Education
- Sui-Chu, E. and Willms, J. (1996). Effects of parental involvement on eighth-grade achievement. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 69, 126-141.
- Sullivan, M. (1991). *Supporting Change in Primary School*, London: Longman.
- Symeou, L.(2001). Family-School Liaisons in Cyprus: an investigation of families perspectives and needs. In Smit, F., Van der Worlf, K., and Slegers, P. (Eds). *A Bridge to future. Collaboration between parents, schools and communities* (pp.33-43). Netherlands: Institute for Applied Social Sciences, University of Nijmegen.
- Tao, S., Edge, K., Kathryn, R., Shams, K. (2008). *Teacher Quality and Parental Participation: An Exploratory review of research and resources related to influencing student outcomes*: London Centre for Leadership in Learning.
- Tatlah, I. and Igbal, M. (2011). Role of Board of Governors and Parent Teacher Associations in District Public Schools in the context of conflicts and challenges. Department of Education, University of Management and Technology, Pakistan.
- Taylor, S. and Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods. A guide book and resource*, New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Tellis, W. (1997). Introduction to Case Study. *The Qualitative Report* [On-Line Serial], 3(2) Available <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-2/tellis.html> (Assessed on 20/03/2015)

- Thomas, G. (2011) How to do your case study, A guide to students and researchers: Sage (p. 27)
- Torre, D. and Murphy, J. (2016) Communities of parental engagement: new foundations for school leaders' work. *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 19, 203-223.
- United Nations Children Fund (2003).Africa's Orphaned Generations, New York, USA.
- Vasavi, A. (2003) 'Schooling for a new society? The social and political bases of educational deprivation in India,' IDS Bulletin, 34 (1) 72-80.
- Watt, P. (2001) Community Support for Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series, World Bank.
- Wallisman, N. (2005). Your research project (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Weishew, N and Penk, S. (1993) Variables predicting students' problem behaviours. *Journal of Educational Research* 87, 1:5-17.
- Wellington, J. (2001). Educational Research: Contemporary Issues & practical Approaches, London: Biddies Ltd..
- Welsh, T. and McGinn, N. (1998). Decentralisation of Education: What and How? Paris: IIEP.
- Williams, M., and Rask, H. (2003). Literacy through play: how families with able children support their literacy development. *Early Child Development and Care*, 173(5), 527-533.
- World Bank (2004). Books, Buildings and Learning Outcomes: An impact Evaluation of World Bank Support to Basic Education in Ghana. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank (2003). Making services work for poor people. World Development Report, 2004, Washington DC: The World Bank
- World Bank (2000). Decentralisation: Rethinking Government, World Development Report 1999/2000. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yeboah, A. (1997). Precious Beads Multiply, Family Decision-making and Girls' Access to primary schooling in Ghana. *International Journal of Education Reform*, 6, pp.412-18
- Yin, R. (2009). Case Study Research: Design and Methods, London: Sage.
- Yin, R. (2003). Case Study Research: Design and Methods (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yoshioka, A. (2010). Promoting Inter-Community-School Relations through the Capitation Grant in Ghana (Unpublished Thesis). University of British Columbia.

Appendix A

SMC/PTA ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

What is School Management Committee (SMC)?

The SMC is a committee designated under Ghana Education Service Act of 1994.

It is a School-Community based institution aimed at strengthening community participation and mobilization for education delivery.

What is the membership?

The SMC is a representation of the entire school-community of a particular school or cluster of schools. The School community therefore, becomes its constituency.

Who forms the School Management Committee?

- District /Municipal Director of Education or representative as an ex-officio member.
- Head master/ Head teacher
- District /Municipal Assembly representative (usually Assembly Person).
- Unit Committee representative
- Representative appointed by the Chief of the town/ village.
- Representative from Educational Unit (if the school is a Unit School).
- Two members of teaching staff (JHS and Primary).
- Past Pupils' Association Representative.
- Representative from PTA.
- Co-opted member to perform specific functions(optional)

What is gender approach?

Communities are encouraged to work towards getting women to constitute at least one-third of membership.

How long is one a member of SMC?

- Executive: three- year term, eligible for only additional three year term.
- Chairman elected for a one year term only.
- Failure to attend ordinary or executive meeting for three consecutive times disqualifies a member from SMC. In such circumstances, he/she should be replaced by the appropriate authority or group of representation.

What are the powers and functions of SMC?

- Control the general policy of the school.
- Avoid encroaching upon the authority of the head master or Head teacher.
- Presents periodic reports to Director General of Education and District education Oversight Committee(DEOC) through the District Director of Education (DDE)
- Ensure the premises of School are kept in a sanitarily and structurally in good state of repair.
- Help the Head master or Head teacher in solving conflicts and report to the District Education Office.
- Refer serious disciplinary cases to the district Director of Education for action.
- Negotiate for land for school projects: e.g., school farm, football field.

When does SMC meet?

- General Meeting once a term
- Emergency meeting as needed.

How many members will form a quorum?

- Five members.
- Voting is by majority decision.

How is SMC funded?

- PTA funds (raised through contribution by parents).
- Donations from NGOs
- Grants/ Gifts.

Who is disqualified to be an executive member?

- An ex-convict who has not been pardoned.
- A person who is declared bankrupt.
- A person of unsound mind.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

What is the Parent/ Teacher Association (PTA)?

The PTA is an association of parents and teachers in a particular school or cluster of schools.

- Non-governmental.
- Non-sectarian
- Non-partisan
- Non-commercial

What is membership?

Parents, guardians and teachers who are interested in children' education.

Who are executive members?

- Chairman
- Vice Chairman
- Secretary (teacher)
- Financial Secretary(parent)
- 1st committee member(parent)
- 2nd Committee member(parent)
- 3rd Committee member(head master or Head teacher)
- School Welfare Officer(Ex-officio member)

Where there is a cluster of Schools, all head masters/ head teachers should be members.

How long is one a member of PTA?

- Member- a parent: As long as one has a child in the school
- Executive member: 2- year term, eligible for two terms only.

What are the powers and functions of PTA?

- Assist in school maintenance and repair of infrastructure
- See to children's/ Head teachers' welfare; e.g., provision of accommodation, school textbooks.
- See to performance of children.
- Visit school regularly to monitor the children's performance.
- Help in solving school problems.
- Help maintain discipline by reporting lateness, truancy etc to school authorities.
- Avoid encroaching upon authority of the Head master/ Head teacher.
- Cooperate with other organizations/ agencies having common interests regarding quality education.

When does PTA meet?

- General meetings at least once a term.
- Emergency meeting at the request of chairman or head master/ head teacher.

How many members will form a quorum?

- General Meeting : one half of membership
- Executive Meeting: Five members.

How is PTA funded?

- Members Contributions.
- Voluntary contribution from stakeholders
- NGOs
- Community.

Who is disqualified to be an executive member?

- People of unsound mind

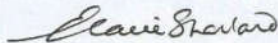
- An ex-convict who has not been pardoned

Source: Ghana Education Service, SMC/ PTA Hand book, (2001, pp.9-11)

Appendix B



University of Sussex

Social Sciences & Arts Cross-School Research Ethics Committee	
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL	
Reference Number:	1112/08/04
School:	ESW
Title of Project	A Case Study of Parental Involvement in Basic Education in Ghana.
Principal Investigator: (Supervisors)	Robert Ghanney (Dr L Gazeley)
Expected Start Date:*	05/11/12
<p>*NB. If the <u>actual</u> project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the <u>expected</u> start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures</p>	
<p>This project has been given ethical approval by the Social Sciences/Arts Research Ethics Committee (C-REC). Please note the following requirements for approved submissions:</p> <p>Amendments to research proposal - Any changes or amendments to the approved proposal, which have ethical implications, must be submitted to the committee for authorisation prior to implementation.</p> <p>Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events - Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.</p>	
Authorised Signature	
Name of Authorised Signatory (C-REC Chair or nominated deputy)	Dr Elaine Sharland 11/0912

Appendix C

FULL DETAILS OF FINAL FOCUS GROUPDISCUSSION

INPUTS BY PARTICIPANTS (SMC, PTA, HEADS OF SCHOOL & TEACHERS)

QUESTION 1: What fora and forms of parental involvement take place in your school?

Inputs by SMC Participants

- Appointment of people to serve on SMC largely recognises well-to-do and influential people, leaving out the poor, but affluent people hardly attend meetings because of their busy schedules.
- Most SMC members overstay their tenure of office with the connivance of school heads.
- Members appointed should be given orientation and occasionally workshops, seminars, in-service training should be organised for them to enable them upgrade their skills in school governance.
- Introduction of capitation grant which takes care of tuition fees should consider other costs such as school uniform, sandals, food, books, pens etc
- SMC members should be deeply involved in the drawing up, verification and authorisation of capitation grants rather than too much reliance on the chairperson
- SMC members should be deeply involved in finance and disciplinary decision-making of the school.
- Teachers fail to return to the classroom after break and are mostly late to school and sometimes indulge in unethical behavior. Teachers need to be monitored and sanctioned

Inputs by Teachers and Heads of School Participants

- The low educational attainments of some SMC members make them contribute less to school governance.
- Most SMC members lack time, confidence and skills due to resource constraints and the fact that they are not provided with copies of PTA/SMC Manuals to guide them in their operations.
- Capitation grants from the Ministry of Education are inadequate in terms of its per-pupil rate and are often released lately
- SMC members intrude into our professional role or domain through their monitoring and supervisory activities of teachers which should cease.

Inputs by PTA Participants

- Delays in the release of capitation grants and District Assemblies Common Fund compel PTA to intervene in the provision of school infrastructural development. For example, PTA has constructed a kitchen facility for School Feeding Programme (SFP) and construction of KVIP facility.
- PTA is involved deeply in fund-raising. For example, PTA owns a farm from which maize and cassava are produced on large scale for sale. PTA has acquired land for forestry products business which is used to finance activities of the school.
- The enormous infrastructural development of the school is borne from levies which sometimes become disincentive to participation in school activities/ meetings.
- PTA raises funds to support pupils and teacher welfare. For example, salary of newly-recruited teachers.
- Performance in the BECE encourages PTA members to make financial inducements to school and teachers to enable them work hard.

- PTA mobilized members to participate in school events which enable members to access information from school, teachers and other parents about their children's academic progress.

Inputs by Heads of School and Teacher Participants

- Heads of school/ teachers lauded the development initiative of PTA towards provision of school physical resources without which it would be difficult for school to own certain facilities.
- Payment of salary advance has been of immense relief to newly-recruited teachers and has increased their morale.
- Donation of foodstuff and cash to teachers as motivation for their effort in improved performance at BECE has helped increase teacher morale.

Appendix D

Excerpts of Initial Coding

SMC	PTA	Barriers to Parental Involvement	Facilitators of Parental Involvement
<p>Teachers are often late to school, Monitoring of school, Teachers are often absent from school, Monitoring of teachers, Teachers sometimes come to school drunk, Sign capitation grant monies, Members are mostly farmers, fishermen, traders. Members are less involved in the administration of the capitation grant scheme, Members are mostly uneducated, few of them are Middle School Certificate holders, Lack of orientation for members, Teachers/school heads quarrel with SMC members over their duties – supervision issues, Most members are political appointees having little knowledge about school related matters. School authorities acted without parental involvement in financial decision-making.</p>	<p>Provision of KVIP, Donation of 100 desks, Mobilised members to support bereavement, Construction of block for School Feeding Programme (SFP), Payment of Salary Advance to teachers, Need to lobby for projects and stop reliance on dues and levies, Provision of text books and other teaching learning materials, Members complain of payment of dues/levies, Raise funds for school through maize and woodlot business. Members consider the performance of pupils at BECE as basis for financial support. Members are able to access information from school, teachers, and other parents which spur them on to get even more involved in school affairs.</p>	<p>Few parents understand English language. Low literacy and limited formal education of parents makes it more difficult to assist with children's homework. High schooling costs in spite of the capitation grant scheme make it difficult to enroll children in school. School children are requested by parents to assist in farming and trading activities to provide for family sustenance. Most parents are single mothers and due to financial constraints are most unlikely to assist with children's education. High preference of boy child education puts girls at risk and eventually affects the capacity of mothers to assist with children's education. Most parents cannot afford children's school fees, uniform, sandals and other learning materials. Corporal punishment and intimidation of parents - a source of confrontation between school officials and parents.</p>	<p>Performance of pupils at BECE motivated parents in financial support and active participation in school activities/events. Grandparents, mothers in particular assisted in children's education whilst biological parents were outside the village on trading and fishing business. In spite of financial difficulties, some parents were motivated to be involved in their children's education on moral grounds though not usual. Involvement of parents in disciplinary and financial decision-making motivated them in school affairs.</p>

Appendix E

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK****RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST**

The Standards apply to all research undertaken, whether empirical or not. When planning non-empirical work, you will need to consider how specific standards and guidelines may best be applied to research approach, processes and potential impact. Where there is no equivalent for non-empirical work, tick 'not applicable', explaining briefly why in the comment box for each standard.

Standard 1: Safeguard the interests and rights of those involved or affected by the research.

1.1 Will you consider the well-being, wishes and feelings, and best interests of those involved or affected?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

1.2 Will written and signed consent be obtained without coercion? Will participants be informed of their right to refuse or to withdraw at anytime?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

1.3 Will the purposes and processes of the research be fully explained, using alternative forms of communication where necessary and making references to any implications for participants of time, cost and the possible influence of the outcome?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

1.4 Where covert research is proposed, has a case been made and brought to the attention of the School Research Governance Committee and approval brought from the relevant external professional ethical committee?

YES
NO
✓ N/A

1.5 Does the proposal include procedures to verify material with respondents and offer feedback on findings?

YES
✓ NO

N/A

1.6 Will conditional anonymity and confidentiality be offered?

YES

✓ **NO**

N/A

1.7 Have you identified the appropriate person to whom disclosures that involve danger to the participant or others must be reported?

✓ **YES**

NO

N/A

Please add further comments if helpful to clarify the above ?

Standards 2: Ensure the safety of researchers undertaking fieldwork

2.1 Have you identified any physical or social risks to yourself in undertaking the fieldwork?

YES

✓ **NO**

N/A

2.2 Will you have access to an administrator who will keep a diary of any fieldwork visits and your whereabouts?

YES

NO

✓ **N/A**

2.3 Have you considered how you will collect your material and whether this could make you vulnerable?

✓ **YES**

NO

N/A

Please add further comments if helpful to clarify the above?

Standard 3: Uphold the highest possible standards of research practices including in research design, collection and storage of research material, analysis, interpretation and writing

3.1 Will literature be used appropriately, acknowledged, referenced and where relevant, permission sought from the author(s)?

✓ **YES**

NO

N/A

3.2 Is the research approach well suited to the nature and focus of the study?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

3.3 Will the material be used to address existing or emerging research question(s) only?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

3.4 Does the research design include means of verifying findings and interpretations?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

3.5 Where research is externally funded, will agreement with sponsors be reached on reporting and intellectual property rights?

YES
NO
✓ N/A

3.6 Will plans be made to enable archiving of the research data?

YES
NO
✓ N/A

Please add further comments if helpful to clarify the above.

Standard 4: Consider the impact of the research and its use or misuse for those involved in the study and other interested parties

4.1 Have the short and long run consequences of the research been considered from different perspectives of participants, researchers, policy makers and, where relevant, funders?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

4.2 Have the costs of research to participants or their institutions/services and any possible compensation been considered?

✓ YES
NO
N/A

4.3 Has information about support services that might be needed as consequence of any possible unsettling effects of the research itself been identified?

YES
NO
✓ N/A

4.4 Are there plans flexible enough to take appropriate action should your project have an effect on the individuals or institutions/services involved?

YES

NO

✓ **N/A**

Please add further comments if helpful to clarify the above

Standard 5: Ensure appropriate external professional ethical committee approval is granted where relevant

5.1 Have colleagues/ supervisors been involved to comment on your research proposal?

YES

NO

✓ **N/A**

5.2 Have any sensitive ethical issues been raised with the School Research Governance Committee and comments sought?

YES

NO

✓ **N/A**

5.3 Has the relevant external professional ethical committee been identified?

YES

NO

✓ **N/A**

5.4 Have the guidelines from that professional committee been used to check the proposed research?

YES

NO

✓ **N/A**

Please add further comments if helpful to clarify the above

Standard 6: Ensure relevant legislative and policy requirement are met

6.1 Do you need an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check?

YES

NO

✓ **N/A**

6.2 Are you certain about implication arising from legislation? If not has contact been made with the designated officer?

✓ **YES**

NO

N/A

Please add further comments if helpful to clarify the above.